



THE HISTORY  
OF ANGLO-INDIA

Second Edition, revised and  
enlarged by the author,  
JAMES H. MILL

S. R. GOYAL

VOLUME TWO













**A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA**  
(upto c. 1200 A.D.)

**VOLUME TWO**

**SMĀRTA, EPIC-PAURĀṆIKA  
AND TĀNTRIKA HINDUISM,  
CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM**



## About the Author

Dr. S.R. Goyal is the Professor and Head of the Department of History, Jodhpur University, Jodhpur (Rajasthan). Born in 1932, he has had an extremely illustrious educational career. He is an alumnus of Allahabad University, Allahabad, from where he graduated (1953) and then obtained Master's degree (1955) standing 'first class first' in Ancient History. He first taught at the C.M.P. College, Allahabad University, Allahabad (1955-58), and then at Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur (1958-70), and is now at Jodhpur University, Jodhpur (since 1970). Professor Goyal is the author of more than 65 research papers and over a dozen significant works which include *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sahyātāyēn* (1963), *Gupta evaṁ Samakālīna Rājavaiśa* (1969), *Prāchīna Nepāla kī Rājanītika aurā Sāmskr̥tika Itihāsa* (1974), *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha* (1982), *Guptakālīna Abhilekha* (1984), *A Religious History of Ancient India* (Vol. I, 1984; Vol. II, 1986), *Kauṭilya and Megasthenes* (1985) and *Harsha and Buddhism* (1986). His doctoral thesis, *A History of the Imperial Guptas* (1967), has been acclaimed as 'the best analysis of the Gupta period which I have ever read' by Professor A. L. Basham (National Professor of Australia) and as 'imaginative', 'well-written' and 'a model of historiography' by Professor Eleanor Zelliott (Minnesota, U.S.A.). The various theories propounded in it, which have been the subject of numerous research papers, are described by Professor R.C. Majumdar, the doyen of Indian history, as 'deserving very careful consideration' and have obtained appreciation and recognition in learned works and journals, both Indian and foreign. His theory that the Brāhmī script was an invention of early Maurya period has also been described as 'penetrative, judicious and most acceptable'.

Professor Goyal is the Chief Editor of a series of 32 volumes on the entire canvas of Indian History and Culture, two of which, namely, *Māgadha Sāmrājya kī Udaya* (1980) and *Mughal Sāmrājya kī Prārambhika Itihāsa* (1985), have already been published. Eminent professors and University teachers of the country are contributing to its various volumes.

Professor Goyal has been a keen student of Philosophy, especially Philosophy of History. He topped in Philosophy at the B.A. Examination of Allahabad University in 1953 and was awarded M.N. Nandi Gold Medal for the same. As a true historian, however, he has a deep knowledge of the original source materials. He has studied in detail the various branches of ancient Indian literature. His two volumes on ancient Indian inscriptions and a forthcoming work on ancient Indian coinage (*The Coinage of Ancient India*) testify to his mastery over epigraphic and numismatic sources. Thus in him is found a rare combination of three branches of knowledge—history, philosophy and literature,

# A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA

(upto c. 1200 A.D.)

VOLUME TWO

Smārta, epic-Paurāṇika  
and  
Tāntrika Hinduism,  
Christianity and Islam

S. R. GOYAL

M.A., Ph.D.

*Professor and Head*

*Department of History*

*University of Jodhpur, Jodhpur*

Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut



© Dr. S.R. Goyal (b. 1932), 1986

**KUSUMANJALI PRAKASHAN**  
Ranjan Building, P.L. Sharma Road  
Begum Bridge, Meerut-250001

All rights reserved including the right to translate. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the written permission of the Publisher.

Published by Shankar Goyal for Kusumanjali Prakashan, Ranjan Building, P.L. Sharma Road, Begum Bridge, Meerut-250001 and printed at Print India, A-38/2, Mayapuri, Phase I, New Delhi-110064. Printed in India.

Dedicated to my esteemed friend  
Dr. S.P. Gupta  
Keeper, Central Asia Section  
National Museum, New Delhi  
as a token of  
my love and affection for him



## OTHER WORKS BY PROFESSOR S.R. GOYAL

### SOME OF THE PUBLISHED WORKS

- Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*  
*A History of the Imperial Guptas*  
*Gupta evaṁ Samakālīna Rājavaiṁśa*  
*Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanitika aurā Sāṁskṛtika Itihāsa*  
*Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*  
*Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya* (ed. with Dr. S.K. Gupta)  
*Mughal Sāmrājya kā Prārambhika Itihāsa* (ed. with Dr. S.K. Gupta)  
*Yuddhakalā* (trans.)  
*Guptakālīna Abhilekha*  
*A Religious History of Ancient India, Vol. I*  
*Kauṭilya and Megasthenes*  
*Harsha and Buddhism*

### FORTHCOMING BOOKS

- Harsha—a New Political Study*  
*The Coinage of Ancient India*  
*A Political History of Ancient India* (in Hindi, 2 vols.)

## Publisher's Preface

The First Volume of *A Religious History of Ancient India* dealing with pre-Vedic, Vedic, Buddhist and Jaina religions, published by us in November, 1984 was highly appreciated by scholars throughout the country. Professor G.C. Pande (Allahabad), Professor A.M. Shastri (Nagpur), Professor Lallanji Gopal (Varanasi), Professor Devahuti (Delhi), Professor Venkata Ratnam (Mysore), Professor K.V. Raman (Madras), Professor B.R. Subrahmanyam (Nagarjunanagar), Professor K. Veerathappa (Bangalore) and a host of others acclaimed the merit of the work. It has been very well received in other countries also. It prompted us to bring out its second volume expeditiously. It deals with the history of Smārta, epic-Paurāṇika and Tāntrika Hinduism, Christianity and Islam upto c. 1200 A.D. After discussing the sources, philosophical bases, nature and the main features of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika religion, Paurāṇika pantheon, avatāravāda, bhakti, image-worship and the role of the epic-Paurāṇika religion and rituals as instrument of social change, Professor Goyal has given a detailed and exhaustive history of the Vaishṇava, Śaiva, Śākta, Saura, Gāṇapatya and other Hindu sects. He also throws light on a number of controversial topics and raises controversies himself in the spirit of a researcher. For example he suggests that the concept of the divine Vāsudeva was originally distinct from and chronologically older than the concept of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, that the personality of Heracles as described by Megasthenes in connection with Mathurā is nearer to the personality of Vaivasvata-Manu of the Vedas and the Purāṇas rather than Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa and that the Indian Dionysus described by Megasthenes represented not one but several gods and legendary personages. The present work gives quotations from original sources and exhaustive notes on and detailed references to the recent most books and research

papers published upto the later part of 1985. For researchers, teachers and good students it is an indispensable work.

### *Some Opinions*

"It is the first and only account of its kind, at once critical, scholarly and upto date. All students and scholars of the subject will be undoubtedly benefited from the work."

**Prof. G C. Pande**, Formerly Vice-Chancellor, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur and the University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

"Dr. S.R. Goyal, known for his valuable researches in political history, has now earned the gratitude of both students and scholars of Indian religions by writing an extremely useful work on religious history of India. In the first volume he has discussed in detail the Protohistoric, Vedic, Buddhist, Jain and other heterodox religions. He has been eminently successful in projecting in a short compass the major religious trends and schools of philosophy in a lucid style and unbiased manner. The treatment is comprehensive. I am sure this work will remain a standard text-book for the years to come."

**Professor V.S. Pathak**, Head, Department of Ancient History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Gorakhpur, Gorakhpur.

"For about eight decades students and scholars have been looking for a book of this nature. It is definitely the most standard and upto date book published on the subject so far. The latest researches have been duly incorporated. For many years to come the book will remain indispensable for all concerned."

**Professor Lallanji Gopal**, Head, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

"This is the only work of its kind published to date inasmuch as it treats of all religions prevalent in ancient India, both indigenous as well as extraneous, as also their socio-economic background and aftermath in an objective manner. The treatment is thorough going and interspersed with original suggestions which are, generally speaking, well-based. The book meets a long-felt *desideratum* and, I am sure, will be found highly enlightening and useful both by the students of the cultural history of India and general readers interested in India's cultural heritage."

**Professor A.M. Shastri**, Head, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University, Nagpur.

"Dr. S.R. Goyal throws light on a number of controversial topics in his recent book *A Religious History of Ancient India* and indeed raises controversies himself in the spirit of a researcher. From the student's view point his book will be particularly useful. His coverage is comprehensive and he touches upon obscure aspects of the subject as well."

**Dr. Devahuti**, Professor of History, University of Delhi, Delhi.

"...the book is a distinct contribution to the subject. It contains not only a survey of the history of the major religious movements in ancient India but also a penetrative analysis of the currents and cross-currents of our religious history. It will be valuable reference work for our research scholars."

**Professor K.V. Raman**, Head, Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, Madras.

"Your book on religion is very comprehensive and your objective study of materials is really wonderful. Your presentation is lucid and analytical."

**Dr. S.K. Maity**, Department of History, Jadavpur University, Calcutta.

"The first volume of *A Religious History of Ancient India*, which describes the Pre-Vedic, Vedic, Jaina and Buddhist religions written by Professor S.R. Goyal, will be of utmost importance to students and teachers alike as it is a comprehensive work which will be valuable as a text-book. Professor Goyal is an experienced teacher and he is well aware of the difficulties faced by students. The book is therefore a must for the students of Ancient Indian Culture."

**Professor M.K. Dhavalikar**, Jt. Director, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune.

"*A Religious History of Ancient India* is upto the mark. It is worthy of being prescribed for research students connected with religious history of India."

**Professor D. Balasubramanian**, Head, Department of History, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.

"I have read Dr. S.R. Goyal's *A Religious History of Ancient India*, Vol. I, with great pleasure and profit. Written in a very simple style the book elucidates the various complicated problems of religious life in ancient India in a charming manner which is sure to benefit both the post-graduate and doctorate students in the field. I have no doubt that this work will be widely welcomed by



## x *A Religious History of Ancient India*

those interested in the early history and culture of India.”

**Professor Upendra Thakur**, Head, Department of Ancient Indian and Asian Studies, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya, Bihar.

“Professor Goyal is to be congratulated on bringing out such an excellent work as *A Religious History of Ancient India* which was a long felt need. The chapter decisions and treatment of the subject are admirable.”

**Professor A.V. Venkata Ratnam**, Head, Department of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in History, Manasa Gangotri, Mysore.

“*A Religious History of Ancient India*, Vol. I, by Professor S.R. Goyal gives a very comprehensive account of the evolution of Hindu religion from its shadowy prehistoric beginnings through early and late Vedic gods and goddesses and the rituals associated with their worship to the reformist movements like Buddhism and Jainism and the subsequent transformation of Buddhism and its eventual decline and assimilation into Hinduism. The book also takes into account the contribution made by the animistic beliefs and practices of the various indigenous peoples of India to the transformation of the relatively simple Vedic pantheon and ritual into the complex Hinduism of the Middle Ages. The work gives a detailed account of the development of Tāntric cult during later phase of Buddhism. The author also takes into account the views of other authorities on religion, thus enhancing the representative character of his study.

Altogether, it is an authoritative work on the early history of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions, and will be an indispensable source of information for all scholars interested in the study of Indian religions.”

**Professor V.N. Misra**, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune.

“*A Religious History of Ancient India* is an excellent work from many points of view... the author has used both archaeological and literary sources. His proficiency in philosophy of history is also fully reflected in the volume. The result is a critical and comprehensive coverage of the subject.”

**Dr. K. Paddayya**, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune.

“Dr. Goyal’s *A Religious History of Ancient India* would be extremely useful for the students of Ancient Indian History and

Culture taking a paper on Indian religions and also for the specialists who would find in it a good bibliographical material for further studies."

**Prof. B.N. Puri**, Retd. Prof. and Head, Department of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology, Lucknow University, Lucknow.

"It is a scholarly, analytical and useful book. I have not seen a book of this type in recent years."

**Dr. A.V. Narasimha Murthy**, Prof. and Head, Dept. of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Mysore, Mysore.

"It is a formidable work carried out with considerable patience and competence. The scholarship needs hardly any words of recommendation."

**Dr. S. Settar**, Prof. and Head, Department of History and Archaeology, Karnataka University, Dharwar.

"It is specially useful for students of senior classes in ancient Indian History and sums up almost everything of value said about different aspects of Vedic religion and philosophy, Buddhism and Jainism."

**Dr. R.N. Misra**, Professor of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

"This is a very interesting and absorbing study of Hindu Religion and Indian Culture from the earliest times upto 1200 A.D. The book is very useful for scholars of Ancient History, Religion, Philosophy and Indian Culture. Prof. S.R. Goyal has made original contribution to the study of Indian History and Religion. I commend this book to the scholars who are deeply interested in Indian Religion and History."

**Dr. K. Veerathappa**, Professor and Head of the Department of History, Bangalore University, Bangalore.

"...is an important contribution to the understanding of religious history of Ancient India. It is particularly important because such a work had not been written earlier.....By writing two volumes of *A Religious History of Ancient India* Dr. S.R. Goyal has done yeoman service in presenting a connected account of religious history. Dr. Goyal's work is very exhaustive and objective. He has not hesitated to give opinions and extracts from authoritative works which differ from his own point of view..... At a number

xii *A Religious History of Ancient India*

of places Dr. Goyal has given an original understanding.....The book should be on the shelf of every library. It would be referred to as a standard work by all scholars interested in ancient Indian religious history."

Dr. M.S. Jain, Professor, Department of History and Indian Culture,  
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

"The book makes an excellent reading and the author has made an original contribution to religious history of the most ancient times in this country. Some of the interpretations given in respect of the religious conditions in the Vedic and Prevedic times are strikingly original."

Dr. B R. Subrahmanyam, Head of the Department of History and Archaeology, Nagarjuna University, Nagarjunanagar.

On Jacket Cover :

*Sarasvatī*, Pallu

*Garuḍa*, Belur

Courtesy, Arch. Sur. of India, New Delhi.



## Author's Introduction

Religion is undoubtedly the most important aspect of Indian culture. In the ancient period of our country's history it dominated the lives and institutions of our ancestors, even if it is seemingly losing some hold in our own age. That is why right from the beginnings of the Indological studies in the eighteenth century it attracted the greatest attention of modern scholarship. Innumerable monographs, many of them by some of the greatest minds of our age, have appeared in India and abroad on the various aspects of ancient Indian religions—their origin, background, founders or main propagators, tenets, canons, other sacred texts, church history, rituals, sects, etc. Therefore it may, at the first sight, be regarded as an overweeningly audacious presumption on my part to make a fresh attempt on such a thoroughly discussed subject. But I have some justification to offer for my venture.

Firstly, it may be pointed out that despite the fact that a vast literature has been produced on the various facets of ancient Indian religions, it is also true that so far no comprehensive work has been written, even in English, which deals with, within reasonable details and authoritatively, all the religions of ancient India—those which took birth in this country as well as those which came from outside—in their various aspects at one place. Most of the works written on ancient Indian religions either discuss particular sects, schools or texts, or the religious condition of a region or period and such other topics. My attempt to describe the entire ancient Indian religious history in one work, divided for the sake of convenience into two volumes (first of which dealing with pre-Vedic, Vedic, Jaina and Buddhist religions was published in November, 1984), seeks to fulfil this *desideratum*.

Secondly, most of the books on ancient Indian religious history are written either without any particular approach in mind and seek to offer a bare outline of the chronological evolution of a

particular religion or sect or attempt to establish the correctness of a particular historical viewpoint. In the present work, however, a wider approach has been adopted, for wherever possible I have discussed not only the role of the various factors—cultural, political, economic, etc.—operating in society behind the origin, nature and evolution of every religion, but have also delineated the role of that religion as a factor of social change. I therefore feel that my work follows a new, something more than what is usually described as sociological, approach.

Thirdly, during the last three decades or so as a university teacher and researcher I have made some humble contributions to the study of ancient Indian religious history; some of them have been published in the form of research articles in learned journals. I have incorporated the results of these researches in this work so that they may be considered by a wider readership and it may be examined as to how far my suggestions change the generally accepted account of the religious evolution of ancient India. For example, I have suggested that the concept of the divine Vāsudeva was originally distinct from and chronologically older than the concept of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, that the personality of Heracles as described by Megasthenes in connection with Mathurā is nearer to the personality of Vaivasvata Manu of the Vedas and Purāṇas rather than Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, that the Indian Dionysus described by Megasthenes represented not one but several gods and legendary personages etc. A detailed discussion on the origin, sources and philosophical bases of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika religion, avatāravāda, bhakti and Paurāṇika rituals, social philosophy of epic-Paurāṇika religion alongwith an exhaustive treatment of all the Paurāṇika sects and sub-sects, Tāntrika Hinduism, Christianity and Islam at one place has also probably been attempted for the first time in the present work.

Lastly, the present work seeks to incorporate, critically examine and synthesize the results of the researches of other scholars in the field of ancient Indian religious history published upto the later part of 1985. An alert reader will note that while discussing the various topics I have made critical and detailed references to the recent-most books and research papers. If a sympathetic reader will feel that I have achieved these objectives,

even if partially, I should think that my labour has been amply rewarded.

The system of transliteration adopted in the book will be apparent from the following examples: Chāṇḍāla, jñāna, Kṛshṇa, saṁskāra, Īśvara, Śaṅkara, ṭhākura, pīṭha, Yaśaḥpāla. Modern proper names of countries, places and individuals have generally been spelled without the use of diacritical marks.

In the preparation of this work I was greatly encouraged and helped by a number of persons. My friends Professor S.K. Lal and Dr. D.C. Shukla and *anuja* Dr. S.K. Gupta were also good enough to read and discuss with me some portions of this work. I thank them all.

I also thank M/s Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut, for bringing it out so promptly and enthusiastically. M/s Print India, New Delhi, took quite an interest in its printing and Mr. Chandra Mohan of M/s Ramarts, Meerut, was kind enough to prepare a cover design according to my wishes. I sincerely thank them.

In the preparation of the Index, Bibliography, etc. I was greatly helped by my daughter Km. Vijayashri Goyal, M.A., and daughter-in-law Mrs. Alka Goyal, M.Sc. Both of them deserve my blessings and praise.

Above all, I take pleasure in acknowledging the help of my wife Mrs. Kusum Goyal and son Mr. Shankar Goyal, M.A., both of whom continued to prompt me to complete this work in the shortest possible time and saw to it that I get every convenience they could provide. I appreciate their contribution in making this venture a success.

For the errors of omission and commission I seek the indulgence of sympathetic readers.

41-A, Sardar Club Scheme  
Jodhpur-342001  
Jan. 6, 1986

S.R. GOYAL





# Contents

|                              | <i>Pages</i> |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Publisher's Preface</i>   | vii          |
| <i>Author's Introduction</i> | xiii         |
| <i>Abbreviations</i>         | xxix         |

## Chapter 1

### ORIGIN AND SOURCES OF SMĀRTA AND EPIC-PAURĀṆIKA RELIGION

1-49

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Place of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion in the Evolution of Hinduism                           | 1  |
| 2. Relation of the Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion with the Vedic Tradition                        | 4  |
| 3. Meaning of Smārta Religion   | 6  |
| 4. Ideological Factors in the Emergence of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion                         | 10 |
| 5. Social Factors in the Emergence of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion: the Concept of the Kali Age | 11 |
| 6. Sources of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion: The Mahābhārata                                     | 16 |
| 7. Rāmāyaṇa   | 18 |
| 8. Bhagvadgītā  | 21 |
| 9. Problems Connected with the Gītā   | 22 |
| 10. Place of Gītā in the Mbh.   | 23 |
| 11. Theory of the Gradual Evolution of the Gītā   | 24 |
| 12. Date of the Gītā  | 26 |
| 13. Sources of the Gītā: Gītā's Relation with the Vedas   | 28 |
| 14. Gītā and the Upanishads   | 30 |
| 15. Elements of Sāṃkhya-Yoga in the Gītā  | 31 |
| 16. Gītā and Buddhism   | 31 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 17. Purāṇas: Chronology, Authorship, Classification, etc.   | 32 |
| 18. Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas as a Source of Religious History | 37 |
| 19. Later (Paurāṇika-Tāntrika) Upanishads                   | 40 |
| 20. Contents of the Paurāṇika-Tāntrika Upanishads           | 42 |
| 21. Smṛtis, Bhāshyas and Nibandhas                          | 47 |

## Chapter 2

### PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF SMĀRTA AND EPIC-PAURĀṆIKA RELIGION

50-71

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Classification of Schools and General Development | 50 |
| 2. Nyāya and Vaiśeshika                              | 51 |
| 3. Sāṃkhya and Yoga                                  | 53 |
| 4. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā                                     | 54 |
| 5. Uttara Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta                         | 55 |
| 6. Gītā as a Vedānta Text                            | 56 |
| 7. Brahmasūtra of Bādarāyaṇa                         | 57 |
| 8. Pre-Śaṅkara Vedāntin Āchāryas                     | 58 |
| 9. Śaṅkarāchārya: His Life and Date                  | 59 |
| 10. Advaitavāda of Śaṅkara                           | 63 |
| 11. Rāmānuja and the Viśiṣṭādvaita School            | 64 |
| 12. Other Forms of Vedānta                           | 66 |
| 13. Chārvāka (Lokāyata) School                       | 68 |
| 14. Indian Atheism                                   | 71 |

## Chapter 3

### EPIC-PAURĀṆIKA PANTHEON AND AVATĀRAVĀDA

72-87

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Transformation of the Vedic Pantheon  | 72 |
| 2. Rise of the Triad of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva                                 | 73 |
| 3. Incompatibility of Viṣṇu and Śiva   | 74 |
| 4. Fundamental Unity of Godhead  | 75 |
| 5. Minor Gods and Goddesses  | 76 |
| 6. Role of epic-Paurāṇika Pantheon in the Emotional Unification of the Country | 78 |
| 7. Avatāravāda: its Meaning  | 79 |
| 8. Popularity of Avatāravāda in India  | 80 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 9. Antiquity of Avatāravāda                     | 81 |
| 10. Avatāravāda in its Classical Form           | 82 |
| 11. Divine Spirit vis-a-vis Its Avatāra         | 84 |
| 12. Kalāvatāras, Amśāvatāras and Prati-Avatāras | 84 |
| 13. Importance of Avatāravāda                   | 86 |

#### Chapter 4

### BHAKTI AND PAURĀṆIKA RITUALS 88-132

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Antiquity of Sectarianism                                   | 88  |
| 2. Meaning and Origin of Bhakti: Bhakti in the Early Vedic Age | 90  |
| 3. Bhakti and Prapatti in the Middle and Later Vedic Age       | 93  |
| 4. Evidence of Pāṇini  | 96  |
| 5. Emergence of Bhakti Cults                                   | 97  |
| 6. Bhakti in the Epics   | 98  |
| 7. Bhakti in the Nārāyaṇīya Section                            | 99  |
| 8. Bhakti in the Gītā  | 100 |
| 9. Bhakti in the Pāñcharātra System                            | 103 |
| 10. Bhakti in the Purāṇas                                      | 105 |
| 11. Bhakti in Buddhism   | 108 |
| 12. Bhakti in Jainism  | 109 |
| 13. Contribution of the Ālvārs and Nāyanārs                    | 110 |
| 14. Contribution of Śaṅkara to Bhakti                          | 114 |
| 15. Contribution of Rāmānuja and other Vedāntins               | 115 |
| 16. The Pūjā Ritual  | 116 |
| 17. Symbol and Image Worship                                   | 118 |
| 18. Philosophy of Symbol and Image Worship                     | 118 |
| 19. Animal Symbols   | 120 |
| 20. Tree Symbols   | 123 |
| 21. Solar Symbols  | 124 |
| 22. Lunar Symbol   | 125 |
| 23. Śivaliṅga, Śrīchakra and Śalagrāma                         | 125 |
| 24. Other Symbols  | 126 |
| 25. Meaning of Image Worship                                   | 128 |
| 26. Was Image Worship Prevalent the Vedic Society ?            | 128 |
| 27. Gradual Recognition of Image Worship in the Aryan Society  | 130 |

Chapter 5

**SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF EPIC-PAURĀṆIKA  
RELIGION AND RITUALS** 133-155

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Main Features of the Hindu Social Life   | 133 |
| 2. Vedism and epic-Paurāṇika Religion   | 134 |
| 3. Hindu Attitude towards Social Change: Doctrine of Ekavākyatā vs. Moral Relativism        | 137 |
| 4. Theories of Kalivarjya and Āpaddharma  | 139 |
| 5. Doctrine of Karman   | 141 |
| 6. Karman in Relation to the Doctrine of Rebirth  | 143 |
| 7. Prāyaścitta, Karmavipāka and Śrāddha   | 143 |
| 8. Doctrine of Karman and Belief in Astrology   | 145 |
| 9. Synthesis of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti and Doctrine of Purushārthas                           | 145 |
| 10. Emphasis on Pravṛtti Dharma, Gṛhasthāśrama and Svadharma in the epic-Paurāṇika Religion | 146 |
| 11. Pūrtadharma (Social Service)  | 149 |
| 12. Dānas (Gifts)   | 150 |
| 13. Upavāsas, Vratas and Utsavas  | 151 |
| 14. Tīrthayātrā (Pilgrimage)  | 154 |
| 15. Temple and Maṭha Organisation   | 155 |

Chapter 6

**VAISHṆAVISM : VISHṆU-NĀRĀYAṆA AND THE  
PĀÑCHARĀTRA** 156-169

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Names of the Sect                                | 156 |
| 2. Vishṇu in the Ṛgveda                             | 157 |
| 3. Factors in the Rise of Vishṇu                    | 158 |
| 4. The Concept of Nārāyaṇa                          | 161 |
| 5. Nārāyaṇa in the Mahābhārata                      | 164 |
| 6. Meaning of Pāñcharātra                           | 165 |
| 7. Relation of Pāñcharātra with the Vedic Tradition | 166 |
| 8. Doctrines of the Pāñcharātra                     | 168 |

Chapter 7

VAISHNAVISM : VĀSUDEVA-KṚSHṆA AND  
BHĀGAVATISM 170-206

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Divine Vāsudeva was Distinct from Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva   | 170 |
| 2. Was Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa a Solar or Vegetation Deity?  | 171 |
| 3. Sources for the Life-History of Kṛshṇa  | 173 |
| 4. Outline of the Life-History of epic-Paurāṇika Kṛshṇa  | 174 |
| 5. Amalgamation of Human and Mythical Elements<br>in the Kṛshṇa Saga   | 176 |
| 6. Kṛshṇa-Devakīputra of the Chhāndogya Upanishad  | 176 |
| 7. Date of Kṛshṇa of the Epic and Chhāndogya   | 179 |
| 8. Evolution of the Kṛshṇa Saga : the Super-imposition<br>of Vedic Legends   | 179 |
| 9. Super-imposition of the Manu-Vaivasvata Legends?<br>Identity of Heracles of Mathurā mentioned by<br>Megasthenes with Kṛshṇa is an a priori Assumption | 180 |
| 10. Indian Heracles in Classical Writers   | 181 |
| 11. Vaivasvata Manu in the Vedic and Paurāṇika Literature  | 183 |
| 12. Indian Heracles of Mathurā Appropriated the Legends<br>of Manu Vaivasvata  | 185 |
| 13. Super-imposition of Legends which Grew out of the<br>Victory of Bhāgavatism over Other Cults   | 187 |
| 14. Kṛshṇa as Gopāla   | 188 |
| 15. Kṛshṇa as Gopivallabha   | 190 |
| 16. Teachings of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa : Gītā as the Primary<br>Work of Bhāgavatism  | 190 |
| 17. The Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Mbh.   | 194 |
| 18. Bhāgavatism and Other Creeds   | 195 |
| 19. Is Bhāgavatism a Plagiarism of Christianity?   | 197 |
| 20. Christian Bias in Allan Dahlquist's Work   | 203 |
| 21. Criticism of Dahlquist   | 204 |

Chapter 8

EVOLUTION, GROWTH AND SPREAD OF  
VAISHNAVISM 207-238

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Evolutionary Stages of Vaishnavism             | 207 |
| 2. Agencies of Syncretism Employed by Vaishnavism | 210 |



xxii *A Religious History of Ancient India*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 3. Concept of Pañchavṛshnīviras   | 210 |
| 4. The Vyūha Doctrine   | 211 |
| 5. Saṅkarshana-Balarāma (Baladeva)  | 213 |
| 6. Theory of Incarnation in Vaishṇavism   | 216 |
| 7. Incarnations of Viṣṇu : Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha                                   | 218 |
| 8. Narasiṃha and Vāmana   | 219 |
| 9. Paraśurāma   | 220 |
| 10. Dāśarathī Rāma  | 221 |
| 11. Buddha, Kalkin and Others   | 222 |
| 12. Viṣṇu's Female Partners   | 223 |
| 13. Origin and Nature of Śrī-Lakṣmī   | 225 |
| 14. Syncretistic Nature of Śrī-Lakṣmī   | 227 |
| 15. Association of Śrī-Lakṣmī with other Gods   | 229 |
| 16. Stages in the Progress of Vaishṇavism : pre-Gupta Period                          | 230 |
| 17. Spread of Vaishṇavism in North India in the Gupta Age                             | 232 |
| 18. Vaishṇavism in North India : post-Gupta Developments : the Emergence of Śrī Rādhā | 233 |
| 19. Growth of Rāma Cult   | 234 |
| 20. Spread of Vaishṇavism in the Deccan and South India                               | 235 |
| 21. Vaikhānasa and Kāśmīrāgama Schools  | 237 |

Chapter 9

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ŚAIVISM 239-256

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Prototype of Śiva in the Indus Religion                  | 239 |
| 2. Rudra in the Vedic Saṁhitās                              | 240 |
| 3. Rudra in the Brāhmaṇas                                   | 241 |
| 4. Rudra-Śiva in the Upanishads                             | 242 |
| 5. Rudra in the Sūtra Literature                            | 244 |
| 6. Rudra-Śiva in the Rāmāyaṇa                               | 244 |
| 7. Rudra-Śiva in the Mahābhārata                            | 245 |
| 8. Rudra-Śiva in the Purāṇas                                | 247 |
| 9. Lines of Development of Rudra into Rudra-Śiva            | 248 |
| 10. Evidence for the Popularity and Early Spread of Śaivism | 249 |
| 11. Liṅgopāśanā : its Popularity                            | 250 |
| 12. Antiquity of Liṅgopāśanā                                | 251 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 13. Epic-Paurāṇika Stories Regarding the Origin of Liṅgopāsanā | 253 |
| 14. Types of Liṅgas  | 254 |
| 15. Idea Underlying the Liṅgopāsanā                            | 255 |

Chapter 10

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>SECTS OF ŚAIVISM</b>                                    | <b>257-280</b> |
| 1. The Main Śaiva Sects                                    | 257            |
| 2. Śiva-Bhāgavatas   | 257            |
| 3. Pāśupatas : the Problem of the Historicity of Śrīkaṇṭha | 258            |
| 4. Lakulīśa  | 259            |
| 5. The Jātis (Branches) of the Pāśupatas                   | 261            |
| 6. Pāśupata Doctrines                                      | 262            |
| 7. Popularity of the Pāśupata Sect                         | 264            |
| 8. Kāpālikas   | 265            |
| 9. The Kālāmukhas  | 270            |
| 10. The Vīraśaiva or Liṅgāyata Sect                        | 272            |
| 11. Kāśmīra Śaivism  | 276            |

Chapter 11

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>ŚĀKTISM (I)</b>   | <b>281-311</b> |
| 1. Origin and Antiquity of the Worship of Mother Principle   | 281            |
| 2. Origin of Goddess Worship in India  | 282            |
| 3. Worship of Mother Principle in pre-Vedic India  | 284            |
| 4. Goddesses in the Early Vedic Religion   | 285            |
| 5. Śāktism in the Middle and Later Vedic Age   | 289            |
| 6. Goddesses in the Upanishads   | 290            |
| 7. Śāktism in the Epics  | 291            |
| 8. Śāktism in the Purāṇas  | 294            |
| 9. The Devīmāhātmya or the Durgāsaptasatī  | 295            |
| 10. Paurāṇika Śaktivāda : Development of Philosophical Aspects   | 299            |
| 11. Lines of Growth and Development of Durgā-Pārvatī Concept : the Absorption of the non-Aryan Deities | 301            |
| 12. Incarnations, Vibhūtis and other Manifestations  | 304            |

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| 13. The Śakti Pīṭhas     | 305 |
| 14. Concept of Mātṛgaṇas | 309 |

Chapter 12

ŚĀKTISM (II) 312-326

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Śakti Principle in Śaivism   | 312 |
| 2. The Ardhanārīśvara Concept   | 313 |
| 3. Śākta Influence on Vaiṣṇavism  | 313 |
| 4. Tārā and other Goddesses in Buddhism                                       | 315 |
| 5. Goddesses in Jainism   | 318 |
| 6. Archaeological Evidence for the Popularity of Śakti Worship                | 319 |
| 7. Literary, Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence for the Popularity of Śāktism | 321 |
| 8. Regional Distribution of Śāktism   | 322 |

Chapter 13

THE SAURA (SOLAR) CULT 327-342

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Proto-historic Background   | 327 |
| 2. Sun Worship in the Vedic Age                                      | 327 |
| 3. The Solar Symbols   | 329 |
| 4. Origin of the Solar Cult  | 330 |
| 5. Evidence for the Continued Existence of the Indigenous Solar Cult | 332 |
| 6. Nature of the Indigenous Saura Sect                               | 333 |
| 7. Foreign Influence on the Solar Cult : the Paurāṇika Evidence      | 334 |
| 8. Foreign Elements in Solar Iconography                             | 338 |
| 9. The Sun Temples   | 339 |
| 10. Maturity and Weakness of the Saura Sect                          | 340 |
| 11. Dvādaśādityas, Revanta and Navagrahas                            | 341 |

Chapter 14

GAṆAPATI AND THE GĀṆAPATYA SECT 343-359

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Introduction                | 343 |
| 2. Gāṇapatya Literature        | 344 |
| 3. Antiquity of Gaṇeśa Worship | 344 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 4. Evolution of the Various Facets of the Personality of Gaṇeśa | 346 |
| 5. Gaṇeśa : the Śiva Element                                    | 347 |
| 6. Gaṇeśa : the Vināyaka Element                                | 348 |
| 7. Gaṇeśa : Bṛhaspati-Brahmaṇaspati Elements                    | 349 |
| 8. Gaṇeśa : Yaksha-Nāga (Elephant) Elements                     | 351 |
| 9. Stories of the Birth of Gaṇeśa                               | 351 |
| 10. Sect and Sub-sects of the Gāṇapatyas                        | 353 |
| 11. Iconography of Gaṇeśa                                       | 355 |
| 12. Philosophy of the Gāṇapatya Sect                            | 356 |
| 13. Popularity of Gaṇeśa  | 358 |

Chapter 15

SKANDA-KĀRTTIKEYA

360-370

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Early References   | 360 |
| 2. Amalgamation of the Various Gods into Skanda-Kārttikeya and the Paurāṇika Stories of His Birth | 361 |
| 3. Non-Aryan Elements in the Personality of Skanda-Kārttikeya                                     | 362 |
| 4. Śaiva Association  | 363 |
| 5. Association with Mayūra  | 363 |
| 6. Vaishṇava Association  | 364 |
| 7. Cock Motif and the Solar Association of Skanda-Kārttikeya                                      | 364 |
| 8. Skanda as a God of Learning  | 365 |
| 9. Skanda as an Amorous God   | 366 |
| 10. Contribution of the Southern Śeyon-Murugan Worship  | 366 |
| 11. Other Links and Elements  | 367 |
| 12. Popularity of Skanda-Kārttikeya   | 367 |

Chapter 16

OTHER GODS AND CULTS

371-386

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Syncretistic Tendencies and Smārta Pañchāyatana Pūjā | 371 |
| 2. Brahmā   | 373 |
| 3. Sarasvatī  | 378 |
| 4. Vyāntara Devatās : Yakshas                           | 380 |
| 5. Vyāntara Devatās : Nāgas, Gandharvas, etc.           | 382 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 6. Miscellaneous Deities : Lokapālas or Dikpālas | 383 |
| 7. Some Folk Deities                             | 383 |
| 8. Nandin  | 384 |
| 9. Garuḍa  | 385 |
| 10. Āyudhapurushas                               | 385 |
| 11. Hanumāna                                     | 386 |

## APPENDIX

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Evidence of the Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitā, Taittirīya Āraṇyaka and Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad on the Antiquity of Paurāṇika Gods | 387-388 |
|---|---------|

### Chapter 17

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| TĀNTRIKA HINDUISM   | 389-415 |
| 1. Meaning of Tantra  | 389     |
| 2. Tantras in Relation to Vedas   | 390     |
| 3. Basic Tenets of Tantra   | 392     |
| 4. Tāntrika Literature  | 394     |
| 5. Tāntrika Sādhana : Mantras, Yantras, Chakras etc. and Dikshā           | 397     |
| 6. Tāntrika Sādhana : Three Bhāvas, Pañchamakāras and Seven Āchāras       | 399     |
| 7. Kaulāchāra   | 401     |
| 8. Rise and Development of Tāntrikism : Tāntrikism in pre-Paurāṇika India | 403     |
| 9. Impact of Tāntrikism on Paurāṇika Religion                             | 404     |
| 10. Tantra and Vaishṇavism  | 406     |
| 11. Tantra and Śaivism  | 407     |
| 12. Tantra and Śāktism  | 408     |
| 13. Tāntrikism in Gāṇapatya Sect  | 410     |
| 14. Tāntrikism and the Concept of Pañchopāsana                            | 411     |
| 15. Tantra in Jainism   | 411     |
| 16. Significance of the Tantras   | 412     |
| 17. Social Outlook of the Tantras   | 414     |



Chapter 18

RELIGIONS FROM BEYOND THE BORDERS (I) :  
CHRISTIANITY AND ZOROASTRIANISM 416-433

1. Hebraic Background of Christianity 416
2. Stages of Hebrew Religious Evolution 417
3. The Bible 419
4. Life of Christ 419
5. Teachings of Christ 422
6. Possibility of Indian Impact on Christianity Before  
its Advent in India 423
7. Christianity in India : Mission of St. Thomas to the  
Court of Gondophernes 425
8. St. Thomas in the South 427
9. St. Bartholomew in Western India 428
10. Post-Thomas and Post-Bartholomew Period 429
11. Zoroastrianism 432

Chapter 19

RELIGIONS FROM BEYOND THE BORDERS  
(II) : ISLAM 434-449

1. Life of Muhammad 434
2. Fundamental Tenets of Islam 437
3. Islam after Muhammad 441
4. Sūfism (Tasawwuf) 443
5. Advent and Early Influence of Islam in India 446

*Bibliography* 450-461

*Index* 462-483



# Abbreviations

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <i>AEV</i>       | Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, by J. Gonda   |
| <i>ABORI</i>     | Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona                                    |
| <i>AIHT</i>      | Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, by F.E. Pargiter  |
| <i>AIK</i>       | The Age of Imperial Kanauj, ed. by R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker                             |
| <i>AIOC</i>      | Proceedings of All India Oriental Conference   |
| <i>Ait. Brā.</i> | Aitareya Brāhmaṇa  |
| <i>Ait. Upa.</i> | Aitareya Upanishad   |
| <i>AIU</i>       | The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. by R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker                              |
| <i>AV</i>        | Atharvaveda  |
| <i>BC,AIG</i>    | The Bhakti Cult and Ancient Indian Geography, ed. by D.C. Sircar                               |
| <i>Brh. Upa.</i> | Bṛhadāranyaka Upanishad  |
| <i>CA</i>        | The Classical Age, ed. by R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker                                      |
| <i>CHI</i>       | Cultural Heritage of India, 4 Vols.  |
| <i>Chh. Upa.</i> | Chhândogya Upanishad   |
| <i>Corpus</i>    | Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III, by J.F. Fleet  |
| <i>DHI</i>       | Development of Hindu Iconography, by J.N. Banerjea   |
| <i>DM</i>        | Devī Māhātmya  |
| <i>EHVS</i>      | Materials for the Study of the Early History of Vaishṇava Sect, by H.C. Raychaudhuri           |
| <i>EI</i>        | Epigraphia Indica  |
| <i>ERE</i>       | Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics   |
| <i>FAI,LSAL</i>  | Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature, ed. by D.C. Sircar |

xxx *A Religious History of Ancient India*

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>HD</i>         | History of Dharmaśāstra, 5 vols., by P.V. Kane                            |
| <i>HIG</i>        | A History of the Imperial Guptas, by S.R. Goyal                           |
| <i>HIL</i>        | A History of Indian Literature, by M. Winternitz                          |
| <i>HSI</i>        | A History of South India, by N.K. Sastri                                  |
| <i>HTR</i>        | History of Tāntric Religion, by N.N. Bhattacharya                         |
| <i>IA</i>         | Indian Antiquary  |
| <i>IHQ</i>        | Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta                                     |
| <i>IMG</i>        | The Indian Mother Goddess, by N.N. Bhattacharya                           |
| <i>Ind. Phil.</i> | Indian Philosophy, 2 vols., by S. Radhakrishnan                           |
| <i>JA</i>         | Journal Asiatique, Paris  |
| <i>JAHR</i>       | Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society, Rajamundry             |
| <i>JAIH</i>       | Journal of Ancient Indian History, Calcutta                               |
| <i>JAOS</i>       | Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven                       |
| <i>JBBRAS</i>     | Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay         |
| <i>JIH</i>        | Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum                                     |
| <i>JBORS</i>      | Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society                              |
| <i>JBR</i>        | Journal of Bihar Research Society   |
| <i>JGJRI</i>      | Journal of the Ganga Nath Jha Research Institute, Allahabad               |
| <i>JNSI</i>       | Journal of Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi                          |
| <i>JOI</i>        | Journal of Oriental Institute, Baroda                                     |
| <i>JRAS</i>       | Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London |
| <i>JRASB, L</i>   | Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters, Calcutta         |
| <i>JUPHS</i>      | Journal of U.P. Historical Society  |
| <i>MASI</i>       | Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India                             |
| <i>Mbh.</i>       | Mahābhārata   |
| <i>MIR</i>        | Megasthenes and Indian Religion, by Allan Dahlquist                       |
| <i>NIA</i>        | New Indian Antiquary  |
| <i>NPP</i>        | Nāgarī Prachārīnī Patrikā   |
| <i>NS</i>         | Numismatic Supplement   |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <i>OST</i>   | Original Sanskrit Texts  |
| <i>PIHC</i>  | Proceedings of the Indian History Congress                             |
| <i>PJ</i>    | Prāchī Jyoti, Kurukshetra  |
| <i>POC</i>   | Proceedings of the Oriental Conference                                 |
| <i>PTR</i>   | Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion, by J.N. Banerjea                        |
| <i>PTS</i>   | Pali Text Society  |
| <i>Rāmā.</i> | Rāmāyaṇa   |
| <i>RHAI</i>  | A Religious History of Ancient India, Vol. I, by<br>S.R. Goyal         |
| <i>RV</i>    | Ṛgveda   |
| <i>ŚB</i>    | Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa   |
| <i>SBE</i>   | Sacred Books of the East   |
| <i>SCT</i>   | Śakti Cult and Tārā, ed. by D.C. Sircar                                |
| <i>TA</i>    | Taittiriya Āraṇyaka  |
| <i>TB</i>    | Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa  |
| <i>Upa.</i>  | Upanishad  |
| <i>VSMR</i>  | Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious<br>Systems, by R.G. Bhandarkar |
| <i>YV</i>    | Yajurveda  |





## Chapter 1

# Origin and Sources of Smarta and epic-Pauranika Religion

### *Place of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion in the Evolution of Hinduism*

It is difficult to give a definition of Hinduism because of its vagueness and variety. In fact it is not a religion like Christianity and Islam; it is a way of life. One can pack any good thing into Hinduism. For example Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have remarked, "If I were asked, I should simply say: It is the search for truth through non-violent means. A man may not believe in God, and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after truth."<sup>1</sup> In the words of Charles Eliot, "Hinduism has not been made, but has grown."<sup>2</sup> According to Monier-Williams, "Starting from the Veda, Hinduism has ended in embracing something from all religions, and in presenting phases suited to all minds."<sup>3</sup> As pointed out by Swami Nikhilananda, it is quite difficult for an outsider to enter into the spirit of a religion in which he has not been brought up. This objection specially applies to the interpretations of Hinduism offered by those, who do not have a feeling for its teachings.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the confusion about the nature of Hinduism has been due to its *sanātantā* and spirit of tolerance which have imparted endless diversity and variety to it.<sup>5</sup> As pointed out by us in the

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Sinha, S.C., in *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, 1983, p. 1 f.

<sup>2</sup>Eliot, Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, I, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>*Hinduism*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Nikhilananda, Swami, *Hinduism*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>One of the earliest uses of the word *Sanātana dharma* is found in the Kharapur Plates of Mādhavavarman (EI, XXXVII, p. 312). There, it is described as consonant with the Vedas and Smṛtis (*Śrutismṛtivyihita Sanātana dharma karmaniratāya*). In the *Rāmā.*, it is used in the sense of 'duty recognised long ago' (II. 29.26 etc.).

## 2 *A Religious History of Ancient India*

very beginning of the first volume of the present work, Hinduism did not have a beginning. Its roots go back to prehistoric times. However, it does not mean that it is an unchanging religion.<sup>1</sup> There are two kinds of *sanātana* or *nitya* substances—*kūḷastha* (unchanging eternal) and *pravāhī* (changing eternal). Hindu religion is *sanātana* or eternal in the latter sense, for it has not only evolved internally but because of its astoundingly tolerant nature it has incorporated and assimilated elements of other thought-currents liberally. Consequently it branched out into an endless variety.<sup>2</sup> It is like a fig-tree, which from a single stem sends out numerous branches destined to take roots and become trees themselves. According to J.B. Pratt Hinduism, which he calls the 'Vedic way', is a 'self-perpetuating religion'.<sup>3</sup> Monier-Williams observes, 'And it may with truth be asserted that no description of Hinduism can be exhaustive which does not touch on almost every religious and philosophical idea that the world has ever known'.<sup>4</sup>

The orthodox religion of ancient India is usually divided under three different heads—Vedism, Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism. This classification is obviously historical and evolutionary. Vedism and Brāhmaṇism are the two phases of the religion of sacrifices while Hinduism may be regarded as representing the phase of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika religion (though in wider sense it includes pre-Vedic, Vedic and heterodox religious systems also). In the beginning of their history the Aryans evolved a kind of ritualistic religion in which forces of nature, conceived as *devatās* were worshipped with sacrifices in which food, meat, soma, etc., were offered to the accompaniment of the muttering of proper *mantras*.<sup>5</sup> These sacrifices were performed with particular ends in view. This religion became much more elaborate in the *Brāhmaṇa* works composed in the Middle Vedic Age.<sup>6</sup> But the religion of sacrifice of the Vedic Aryans was the religion of majority; for, as shown by us, even in the R̥gvedic age there existed sections of thinkers who questioned the existence of Indra and regarded sacrifice as futile.<sup>7</sup> Their voice

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *A Religious History of Ancient India (RHA I)*, I, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Bouquet, A.C., *Hinduism*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Pratt, J.B., *Why Religions Die?*, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Goyal, S.R., *RHA I*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, Ch. 4.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 87.

was strengthened when the non-Aryan and non-Vedic people (mentioned in the *RV* as Munis, Yatis, Śiśnadevāḥ, Mūradevāḥ, etc.) began to influence the Aryan society.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this development, in the Upanishads the sacrificial religion was relegated to the background and its place was taken by an ardent search of Brahman, the one eternal entity (*sat*) to be realized by *upāsana*, and not by sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> The *Gītā* also denounces those who follow this-wordly religion of the Vedas (II. 42-44).

However, the early Vedic and Brāhmaṇical tradition, which was always regarded as authoritative and divinely ordained, contributed a lot towards providing the basis for the later mythological stories about the Paurāṇika gods, though the contribution of the non-Aryan and non-Vedic thought-current to the evolution of the Paurāṇika religion was not insignificant. It has been argued by a number of scholars that the roots of bhakti, one of the most important components of this religion, are traceable in the religion of the pre-Vedic people. In any case it emerged as a strong force in the post-Upanishadic period. In its turn, it led to the emergence of a number of religious cults centring round the worship of individual gods, such as Vaishṇavism, Śaivism, Śāktism, the Solar cult, cult of Gaṇeśa, etc. Literary and archaeological data of the early historical period suggest that non-Vedic deities like the Yakshas, Nāgas, Gandharvas, Apsarās and others were already objects of devotional worship by the people in the early Buddhist period. A *Niddesa* passage refers not only to the Buddhists, Jainas, Ājīvikas and the worshippers of Maṇibhadra, Baladeva, Vāsudeva, Sūrya, Chandra, Agni, Brahmā, Prajāpati and Nāgas but also to those who worshipped elephants, dogs, crows, etc.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Paurāṇika cults originated not only from the Vedic deities alone, but also from the worship of the non-Vedic gods and goddesses and historic and semi-historic personalities. The prevalence of these cults, the strength and onslaught of Buddhism, Jainism and other dissenting sects and the disturbances caused by the invasions of the Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas, etc. (*infra*), gave much food for thought to those

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, Ch. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, Ch. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems (VSM)*, p. 3; Banerjea, J.N., *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion (PTR)*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 10 f.



#### 4 *A Religious History of Ancient India*

who were devoted to the Vedic religion and induced them to write works setting forth new ideologies and practices and effecting a restatement of the ancient Vedic religion. The Smṛtis later theistic Upanishads and Purāṇas were composed to achieve this task of re-orientation. To some extent the same task was performed by the Epics and later on by the authors of the Nibandhas and Smṛti Bhāshyas. As all these works constitute the basic source-material for the Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika religion, we will discuss their chronology, contents, authorship, etc., in the later part of this Chapter.

##### *Relation of the Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion with the Vedic Tradition*

Though the Smārtas and the Paurāṇikas sought to re-establish Varṇāśramadharma, their attitude towards the Vedas was not without some reservation. The Purāṇas set about their task of giving new orientation to the traditional religion by saying that for the proper understanding of the Veda, knowledge of Itihāsa and Purāṇa was essential. A famous verse says 'one should strengthen the Veda by (the study and application of) Itihāsa and Purāṇa'.<sup>1</sup> But the claims of the extant Purāṇas go far beyond this (*viz.* understanding and strengthening the Veda). At first it was said that the dharma understood from the Veda was the highest, while the dharma declared in the Purāṇas and the like was inferior. The *Devībhāga-vata P.* states that Śruti (Veda) and Smṛti are the eyes of dharma and Purāṇa its heart, and that that is dharma which is declared by these three.<sup>1</sup> Later on the Purāṇas appear to claim priority to (and equality with) the Veda. The *Matsya* and other Purāṇas state that Brahmā first thought of the Purāṇas before all other śāstras and then the Vedas sprang forth from his lips. Several Purāṇas are spoken of as equal to the Vedas (*Vedasammita*). The Purāṇas also say that reading the Purāṇas or listening to a recitation of them would destroy all sins. Some of the Purāṇas indulge in extravagant praise of themselves. The *Varāha P.* (217.12-13, 217.15-16), for example, states that reading ten chapters of that Purāṇa confers the merit secured by the performance of Agnishtoma and Atirātra sacrifices. Thus the Purāṇas adopt the same attitude towards the

<sup>1</sup>Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstra (HD)*, V, II, p. 914 and n. 1449.



Vedas as the Upanishads do: they treat the Vedas as authoritative but at the same time prescribe their own *mantras*, give more emphasis to their own *vidhi* (mode of worship) than to the Vedic ritual and make claims about their priority to the Vedas and about their own value and efficacy.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of reservation towards the Vedas as shown by the Purāṇas was perhaps the result of the fact that in the various Paurāṇika sects from their very inception there were elements of non-Vedic origin. The modern Vaishṇavas consist generally of the Pāñcharātras and the Bhāgavatas. Now, one of the earliest documents of the Pāñcharātras is the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mahābhārata* (XII, 335-351) according to which there were seven Chitrāśikhaṇḍin ṛshis who proclaimed, on the mount Meru, a Śāstra which was at par (*sammita*) with the four Vedas. This Śāstra contained one lakh ślokas and was meant for the common men. As it was intended to direct them both in activity (*pravṛtti*) and inactivity (*nivṛtti*), it was made consistent with the four Vedas. According to R.C. Hazra it implies the originally non-Vedic, if not also anti-Vedic, character of the ideas and practices of the Pāñcharātra system. It is also explicitly stated in the *Mbh.* that the Pāñcharātra system is different from the Vedic: 'Know, O saintly king', it says, 'the Sāṃkhya, the Yoga, the Pāñcharātra, the Vedas and the Pāsupata as knowledges holding different views.'<sup>2</sup> Further, the early Saṃhitās of this sect are not favourable to the Varṇāśramadharma and the authority of the Vedas. On the other hand, the influence of the Varṇāśramadharma on the Saṃhitās increases with their comparatively late dates. From this Hazra has concluded that the originally non-Vedic as well as anti-Vedic ideas of the Pāñcharātras permeated in the Saṃhitās while the idea of reconciling the scripture of the seven ṛshis with the Vedas found its later expression in the epics and the Purāṇas.<sup>3</sup>

Bhāgavatism also was not very favourably disposed towards the Varṇāśramadharma and the Brāhmaṇas. The Vṛshṇis, among whom Kṛṣṇa was born, were noted for their irreverent attitude towards the Brāhmaṇas, and the casteless Yavanas and other

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 915, 927, 934.

<sup>2</sup>Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, Delhi, 1975, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 199.

## 6 A Religious History of Ancient India

foreigners were freely admitted into the Bhāgavata fold. The Besnagar inscription of c. 100 B.C. mentions Heliadores, an ambassador of the Greek king Antialkidas, as a Bhāgavata.<sup>2</sup> The *Bhāgavata P.* (II, 4,18) also refers to the acceptance of Bhāgavatism by the Yavanas and other foreigners.

According to Hazra the early character of Śaivism also does not seem to have been very favourable to the Varṇāśramadharma and the authority of the Vedas. It is hinted at in a dialogue between Dakṣa and Śiva in the *Mbh.*, in which the latter says that in ancient times he formulated the Pāśupata system which was 'contradictory to, though in a very few cases agreeing with, the rules of the Varṇāśramadharma' and which was 'denounced by the unwise'. It is probably because of their non-Brahmanical ideas and practices that the Pāśupatas were looked down upon by the Smṛti writers. The *Smṛtichandrikā* (II. 310) quotes from the *Shāṭṭrimśanmata* three lines which state that "A man should bathe with all his clothes on if he chances to touch the Buddhists, the Pāśupatas, the Jainas, the Lokāyatikas, the Kāpilas, and those Brāhmaṇas who have taken up the duties not meant for them. But if he touches the Kāpālikas, he should perform Prāṇāyāma in addition." The Kāpālikas, Sāttvatas, Buddhists, Jainas and others are called '*durāchārāḥ śauchāchārabahishkṛtāḥ*' in a passage quoted by Aparāka from the *Brahmāṇḍa P.* and are classed by him with the out-castes (*patitas*).<sup>2</sup> Examples of hatred towards the Śaivas, especially the Kāpālikas, are quite frequent in Sanskrit literature. The main cause of this hatred seem to be their peculiar non-Vedic manners and customs. They cared little for the caste and āśrama rules, admitted foreigners within their fold, allowed Śūdras and women to have dīkṣhā and worship the deity, laid special stress on sannyāsa for the practice of Yoga, and thus encouraged the breach of discipline in society.<sup>3</sup>

### Meaning of Smārta Religion

Thus, the original character of these two religions was most probably non-Brahmanical. By this it is not meant that those who worshipped Viṣṇu and Śiva were all influenced by non-Brahmanical ideas and practices and violated the Brahmanical rules of castes

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*, p. 156f.

<sup>2</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 201f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 202.

and stages. It, however, does mean that these two religions in their popular character were originally imbued with non-Brāhmaṇical ideas and practices. On the other hand, as pointed out by Hazra, it seems that among the early worshippers of these two deities there was one section of people who, though won over to the worship of these deities, looked upon the Vedas as authoritative, attached great importance to the Varṇāśramadharma and Smṛti rules, and did not like to give them up. They may be called Smārta-Vaiṣṇavas and Smārta-Śaivas. The *Jayākhya saṃhitā* mentions such Smārta adherents to the Pāñcharātra system. Probably among the Śiva-worshippers also there were adherents of the Smārta category. It is undoubtedly these Smārta adherents of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism to whom the composite character of Paurāṇika Hinduism was originally due. As pointed out by S.K. Belvalkar<sup>1</sup> they strengthened the Varṇadharma, the corner-stone of the Vedic religion and society (which had for generations ceased to exist except in theory), by inventing the device of hypothetical *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages which brought all the newly-formed ethnical and social groups technically within the walls of the four varṇas or castes. For the common man they provided in the form of several codes and treatises a complete guide prescribing for him, as far as possible on the Vedic pattern, exactly what he should do and what he must avoid almost every hour of the day, and every day of the year, and under all conceivable situations. They developed the doctrines of the Āpaddharmas (duties regarded as permissible under stress of circumstances) and Kalivarjyas (actions which, although once permissible and even obligatory, have to be given up in the Kaliyuga).<sup>2</sup> These two doctrines, worked out with greatest possible details, ensured a nominal allegiance to the old Vedic religion and social order while actually affording ample scope to the inevitable modifications in beliefs and practices that were bound to emerge with the passage of time. The art of deviating from the past while yet honestly professing to revere it was thus cultivated to perfection. In the religious field these thinkers propounded the theory of the avatāras or incarnations of the Deity, adumbrated long before the age of the *Bhāgavadgīta* (infra,

<sup>1</sup>Belvalkar, S.K., *Shree Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on the Vedānta Philosophy*, Poona, 1929, pp. 179-81.

<sup>2</sup>Singh, Ranajit, *Dharma ki Hindu Avadhāraṇā*, Allahabad, 1977, Ch. IX.



## 8 A Religious History of Ancient India

Ch. 3). It was now given an all-round extension so that the varied objects of adoration of the votaries of the innumerable religious sects could all be regarded as sparks, emanations, powers or forms of one and the same Deity – call it Vishṇu, Śiva or Śakti—howsoever diverse may have been their methods of adoration and modes of worship. They spread the mantle of the avatāra theory even over Buddhism and the other heretical sects. They also made an organized effort to check the disintegrating tendencies of the countless sects and cults amongst which India was divided by establishing and developing specific places of pilgrimage scattered all over the length and breadth of the land, in connection with which there grew up in time various accredited legends of gods, goddesses, and saints (*infra*, Ch. 4). Probably such persons were also the authors of the present Purāṇas, because these works exhibit, on the one hand, the sectarian zeal in glorifying their respective deities and, on the other, try to establish the Varṇāśrama-dharma and the authority of the Vedas.

In the post-Gupta period the rise and growth of Tāntrikism affected the nature of Brāhmaṇism quite seriously. So the authors of the contemporary Purāṇas deemed it necessary to add chapters on pūjā, vrata, homa, sandhyā, utsarga, etc., in these texts, which they tried to render free from Tāntrika elements as far as practicable and infuse them with Vedic rituals. As argued by Hazra occurrence of these topics in the comparatively late Purāṇas, or parts thereof, and the way in which the Purāṇas denounce the scriptures which imbibed Tāntrika influence, tend to support this hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> In the *Kūrma P.* which was undoubtedly interpolated by the Smārta-Śāktas (i.e., those Śāktas who, like the Smārta-Vaiṣṇavas and Smārta-Śaivas, worshipped the Tāntrika deities, but observed the Śmṛti rules with equal devotion), the literatures of the Kāpālas, Bhairavas, Yāmālas, Vāmas, Ārhataś, Kāpilas, Pāñcharātras and ‘many others of this type’ are called ‘Śruti-Smṛti-viruddha’ and are said to be intended to delude those who mislead others. On the other hand, Devī is made to say in this very Chapter: “Sacrifices etc., which are ordained by Śruti and Smṛti, are known as Dharma. Nothing else is the source of Dharma; it is the Veda from which Dharma originated”. In *Kūrma P.* I. 16, which was added by the Pāśupatas,

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

the Śāstras of Kāpālas, Nākulas, Vāmas, Bhairavas, Pūrva-paśchimas, Pāñcharātras, Pāśupatas (i.e., Āgamic Śaivas) and others are said to have been meant for the delusion of those outside the pale of the Vedas, and their sectaries are called 'Pāshaṇḍas' with whom none is advised to speak.<sup>1</sup> In the *Devībhāgavata*, which belongs to the Smārta-Śāktas, Devī says to Himālaya: "What is ordained by Śruti and Smṛti is called Dharma. What the other scriptures say is the shadow of Dharma. The Veda arose from my omniscient and omnipotent self.....The king should banish from his kingdom those outlaws who forsake the Veda-dharma and take recourse to another.....The various other Śāstras found on earth, which are contradictory to Śruti and Smṛti, are Tāmasa pure and simple. Śiva composed the scriptures of the Vāmas, Kāpālikas, Kaulas and Bhairavas with the only intention of delusion. For the deliverance of those best Brāhmans who were burnt by the curses of Dakṣa, Bhṛgu and Dadhīca and were caused to deviate from the path of the Vedas, the Āgamas of the Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas, Sauras, Śāktas and Gāṇapatyas were written as steps (sopāna) by Śaṁkara. In some places of these works there are some portions which do not go against the Vedas. By accepting these (portions) the Vaidikas do not incur sin."<sup>2</sup>

From the above discussion it appears that the composite character of the Panrāṇika religion was due to the attempt made by the Smārta Brāhmaṇas to preach and popularise their respective faiths against the heresies, and to establish the Brāhmaṇical rules of castes and duties and the authority of the Vedas among the followers of at least their respective sects. However, as emphasized by Hazra, the composite Dharma, which the extant Purāṇas preach, was not allowed by the orthodox Brāhmaṇists to be identified with their own ancient Vedic tradition. Though the Smārtas tried to exalt the Paurāṇika Dharma, it was always regarded by the orthodox Brāhmaṇists as inferior to the Vedic. Halāyudha quotes Vyāsa to say: "Nothing other than the Veda is required by those who want purity of Dharma. (The Veda) is the pure source of Dharma; others are called composite. So, the Dharma, which is derived from the Veda, is the best. But that (Dharma), which is contained in the Purāṇas etc., is known to be inferior".<sup>3</sup> From this it is obvious

<sup>1</sup>Quoted, *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 227.



## 10 *A Religious History of Ancient India*

that Vedic Brāhmaṇas (i.e. those followers of Brāhmaṇism who performed the Śrauta and Smārta rites only and did not worship the sectarian deities) continued to exist side by side with the followers of Paurāṇika Hinduism though there was a continuous fall in their number.

### *Ideological Factors in the Emergence of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion*

Many factors contributed to the emergence of the Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika phase of Hinduism. Let us first discuss the ideological factors. Among these perhaps the most important was the growing popularity of the doctrines of rebirth and karman. As we have discussed elsewhere these gradually changed the contour of the Vedic religion. According to the new ideology, the end of life is not 'to live a hundred autumns' and 'to see the sun longer' (as the Vedic ṛshis prayed), but to be released from the cycle of rebirth and not to see any autumn at all.<sup>1</sup> Man is in bondage with the prospect of an unending chain of rebirth, and the aim of religion should be to release man from this chain. New legends were created in order to impress upon the people this new doctrine. The last sections of the *Mbh.*, the *HV* and the Purāṇas abound in such legends. The best known is perhaps of the seven hunter brothers of Daśārṇa who were reborn successively as deers at Mount Kālañjara, as chakravākas in Śaradvīpa, as swans in Lake Mānasa and finally as Brāhmaṇas at Kurukshetra.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the impact of the doctrines of rebirth and karman an element of fatalism also crept into the Indian attitude to life. Despite the claim that man is the architect of his own fate, in real practice belief in gods as masters of human destiny became stronger.<sup>3</sup> In a way it was also a reaction to the ritualism of the *Brāhmaṇas* which had made gods subservient to *yajña*. In Paurāṇika Hinduism Śiva is Kāla, with Yama (called Kṛtānta, a synonym for fate) as his assistant. Kṛṣṇa calls himself Kāla, the destroyer of men or worlds (*lokakshayakṛt*). People now saw themselves as victims of an unknown and ineluctable power, which may actually

<sup>1</sup>*RHAI*, p. 124ff.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharji, Sukumari, *The Indian Theogony*, Cambridge, 1970, p. 354. For a detailed study see Kane, P.V., *HD*, V, ii, Ch. XXX, p. 1530ff.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharji, *op. cit.*

be the fruits of their own deeds performed in previous births, but which appears as Fate, a mysterious force in this life, if only because knowledge of the previous birth is withheld and causal relation between deeds of earlier births and the present lot is not known. Thus rebirth and karman left a deep impression of fatalism on people's minds.<sup>1</sup>

Another important factor in the emergence of the Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika religion was the reaction against the bloodshed involved in Vedic animal sacrifices<sup>2</sup> (cf. the *Mbh.* episode of King Vasu Uparichara's conversation with the sages). Even in the *Brāhmaṇas* cereals, not meat, has been shown to be the proper sacrificial offering. Numerous stories given in the twelfth and thirteenth books of the *Mbh.* point out the sin involved in violence even in religious sacrifices. Ahimsā as a spiritual value had unquestionably greater appeal to the public imagination necessitating a revaluation of old religious values. Bloody sacrifices were not wholly given up but they certainly lost favour. Now it was emphasized that the path to release from recurring births lay through devotion, knowledge and works of social service. These were advocated by one or the other rising school of religious thought and practice. Knowledge belonged primarily to the realm of metaphysics and meditation. Deeds of social service were now regarded as inseparable part of religious ceremonies (infra, Ch. 4). *Bhakti* or devotion was however a somewhat new approach because it was looked upon as a substitute for ritual performances. Devotion means reliance on a personal god for attaining the ultimate goal (infra Ch. 4). The concept of a personal god was foreign to the Vedic religion where all gods were objects of communal worship, and where the object of ritual was worldly bliss. With the doctrine of rebirth this bliss was regarded as illusory and attachment with worldly pleasures began to be condemned as the root-cause of *samsāra chakra*. Personal gods were, therefore, now primarily sought as liberators although wealth, prosperity and longevity were also prayed for.

*Social Factors in the Emergence of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion : the Concept of the Kali Age*

The transformation of the Vedic religion into Smārta and epic-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Kane, *HD*, II, p. 10; V, ii. pp. 944-7; 1646-8.

## 12 *A Religious History of Ancient India*

Paurāṇika religion was facilitated by social disturbances also. In the post-Upanishadic period the Indian society was constantly disturbed by the advent of foreign tribes such as the Achaeminids, Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas, Kushāṇas Ābhīras, Hūṇas and others, who founded extensive kingdoms and settled in the country. Though these foreigners, who were mostly nomadic, accepted Buddhism, Śaivism or Vaiṣṇavism and were soon Hinduised, their anti-Brāhmaṇical manners and customs and variable standards of morality could not but influence the people. The *Vishṇu P.* describes their impact thus : "The people of various countries will intermingle with them and follow their example; and the barbarians, being powerful under the patronage of princes, and the purer tribes, acting in a contrary manner (*viparyayena vartamānāḥ*), will destroy the people. Wealth and piety will decrease day by day, until the world will be wholly depraved. Then property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of Dharma; passion will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in litigation; and women will be objects merely of sexual gratification. The Earth will be venerated but for her mineral treasures; the Brāhmaṇical thread will constitute a Brāhmaṇ; external types will be the only distinctions of the several orders of life; dishonesty will be the (universal) means of subsistence; weakness will be the cause of dependence; menace and presumption will be substituted for learning; liberality will constitute Dharma; simple abolution will be purification; mutual assent will be marriage; fine clothes will be dignity; and water or a temple afar off will be esteemed as a holy place (tīrtha). Amidst all castes, he who is the strongest will reign over a principality thus vitiated by many faults. The people, unable to bear the heavy burdens imposed upon them by their avaricious sovereigns, will take refuge amongst the valleys of the mountains, and will be glad to feed upon (wild) honey, herbs, roots, fruits, leaves and flowers; their only covering will be the bark of trees; and they will be exposed to the cold, and wind, and sun, and rain. No man's life will exceed three and twenty years. Thus, in the Kali age, shall decay constantly proceed, until the human race approaches its annihilation."<sup>1</sup> This Paurāṇika account is amply supported by inscriptions. According

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 216 f.



to the Betul inscription (dated 518-519 A.D.) Mahārāja Saṁkshobha was bent upon establishing the religious duties of varṇas and āśramas (*varṇāśramadharmasthāpanābhīratena*).<sup>1</sup> About Yaśodharman-Visṇuvardhana of Malwa (known date 532 A.D.) his Mandasor inscription states: "He, to whose arm, as if (to the arm) of (the god) Śārṅgapāṇi,... the earth betook itself (for succour), when it was afflicted by kings of the present age, who manifested pride; who were cruel through want of proper training; who, from delusion, transgressed the path of good conduct (*laṅghitā-chāramārgair mohāt*.....); (and) who were destitute of virtuous delights..... He who, in this age which is the ravisher of good behaviour..... not associating with other kings who adopted a reprehensible course of conduct...etc." Numerous such passages from the epigraphs of the Maukharis and others may easily be collected.

Trouble was also created for the Brāhmaṇas and Vedic religion by the political supremacy of the non-Vedic Kshatriyas, under the Nandas (who were Śūdras), and the Mauryas (who were Vrātya Kshatriyas). A glimpse of this social disorder can be gathered from the Purāṇas in which there are chapters on the description of the Kali age. The fact that the numerous verses on the Kali age found in the chapters of the different Purāṇas are common shows that these were derived from a common source, which must have been very old. These chapters give us the picture of a society "in which the people often neglected the caste and Āśrama rules, and were influenced by the non-Brāhmanical and anti-Brāhmanical ideas and beliefs. The spread of the heresies told upon the people to such an extent that the members of all the four castes and Āśramas were affected more or less. The people did not often like to observe the rules of castes and to carry into execution the duties enjoyed by the Ṛg. the Sāma and the Yajur-veda. Their mind was always occupied with the thoughts of money, and they did not hesitate to adopt unfair means to acquire it. The twice-born gave up the study of the Vedas and the performance of sacrifices which were reserved for the 'foolish'. They forsook their own Dharma, became wandering mendicants in hundreds and thousands and worshipped gods with popular songs, but could not attain the supreme

<sup>1</sup> *EI*, VIII, p. 287 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Fleet, Corpus*, III, p. 146 ff.

Brahma. They neglected the rules of Snāna, Homa, Japa, Dāna etc., and spoke ill of the Brāhmins, the Vedas, the Dharmśāstras and the Purāṇas. They performed various acts on the authority of the non-Vedic works, lost all attraction for their own duties, cared little for the rules of conduct, mixed with the heretics, and became professional beggars. They alarmed the people with their bad ambitions, bad education, bad customs and bad earnings.....Men of all degrees pretended to be equal with the Brāhmins and defied their authority. They did not care for the directions of the Brāhmins in fasting, observing vows and making gifts, but were guided by their own *a priori* speculations. The Vaiśyas gave up trade and agriculture, and earned their livelihood by servitude or the exercise of mechanical arts. In this way the pure Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas were almost extinct, and the prevailing caste was the Śūdra. The Purāṇas further say that in the Kali age the majority of kings were Śūdras. This political supremacy of the Śūdras made their position felt by the members of the higher castes. 'The Purāṇas give interesting accounts of this elevated position of the Śūdras. The Kūrma-p. says : The foolish (Śūdra) commoners drive away the Brāhmins when the latter are found occupying seats, and the Śūdra officers of state beat them. The Śūdras occupy better seats in the midst of Brāhmins, and the kings insult the latter. The Brāhmins, who are less educated in the Vedas and are less fortunate and powerful, honour the Śūdras with flowers, decoratives and other auspicious things. Though thus honoured, the Śūdras do not care to favour the Brāhmins even with a kind glance. The Brāhmins do not venture to enter the houses of the Śūdras, but stand at the gates for an opportunity to pay respect to them. The Brāhmins, who depend upon the Śūdras for their livelihood, surround them, when they are seated in vehicles, with a view to honouring them with praises, and teach them the Vedas. Thus even the best of Brāhmins fare against the directions of the Vedas, turn non-believers, and sell the fruits of their penance and sacrifices. The Śūdras, who had knowledge of Dharma and Artha, read the Vedas, and the Śūdra monarchs performed horse-sacrifices.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the 'Kali age' the condition of Brāhmaṇism became very insecure. Consequently, the Brāhmaṇists felt it necessary to

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-9.

make an attempt to re-establish the Varṇāśramadharma, the authority of the Vedas, and the moral rules among women, Śūdras and those members of the upper three castes who, being influenced by the faiths other than Brāhmaṇism, disregarded the Vedas and violated the rules of the Varṇāśramadharma. According to Hazra, this attempt was made by two sections of people in two different ways; viz., by the orthodox Brāhmaṇists who first began to preach the performance of Gṛhya rites through Smṛti works, and by the more numerous Smārta-Vaiṣṇavas and Smārta-Śaivas who introduced Smṛti materials into the *Mbh.* and the Purāṇas to preach Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism as against the heretical religions and also to establish the Varṇāśramadharma, the authority of the Vedas, and the moral rules not only among the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas but also among others.<sup>1</sup> That this intention was at the base of the introduction of Smṛti-matter into the *Mbh.* and the Purāṇas is evidenced by the Purāṇas themselves. The *Bhāgavata P.* says: "Women, Śūdras and the mean twice-born are unfit for hearing the Vedas, and are, therefore, ignorant of performing, in this world, the good (in the shape of) work; for this reason, the sage, by (his) grace, compiled the legend of Bhārata, with a view that their good in this behalf may be affected"; and "Verily, pretending (to compile) the Bhārata, I have pointed out the meaning of the Vedas, and in which (said Bhārata) can surely be found the meaning of (all those subjects of which) Dharma is the first, even by women, Śūdras and others".<sup>2</sup> The *Devībhāgavata* says: "Women, Śūdras and the mean twice-born (dvijabandhu) are not entitled to hear the Vedas; it is only for their good that the Purāṇas have been written". Therefore, according to P.V. Kane "in the case of Śūdras the listening to the Bhārata was deemed to bring about the same result the Veda does for dvijas."<sup>3</sup> According to Hazra also the contents of the *Mbh.* and the earlier Purāṇas (viz. *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Vishṇu*) as compared with those of the later Purāṇas seem also to betray such a motive of their authors. "It should be noted here", he remarks, "that this attempt of the Smārta devotees of the different gods to preach their respective faiths with a view to establishing the Varṇāśramadharma and the authority of the Vedas was responsible for

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 213 f.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, *HD*, V, ii, p. 922.



## 16 *A Religious History of Ancient India*

giving rise to Purāṇic Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Brāhmanism, Śāktism etc., as distinct from their popular prototypes.”<sup>1</sup>

*Sources of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion : The Mahābhārata*

The study of the Epics (*Itihāsa*) and Purāṇas has been stressed as necessary for the correct interpretation of the Vedas (*Itihāsa-purāṇābhyāṃ Vedaṃ samupabrīḥayet*). The origin of the epics has been traced to the Vedas. According to Oldenberg germs of the epics may be traced to the *saṃvāda* hymns of the *RV*; Max Müller and Lévi have opposed this view. This much, however, is true that the Gāthā-Nārāsaṃsīs, Ākhyānas, Itihāsa, Purāṇa, etc. of the *Brāhmaṇas*, whose recital formed part of the Vedic sacrifices, supplied materials for and developed into lengthy ballads which later on became the nucleus of the two epics.<sup>2</sup>

The word ‘Mahābhārata’ has been explained as “the narrative of the great life-history of the Bharatas”. At one place the *Mbh.* says that it so called because of its greatness, enormity in size and weightiness. Its central theme is the victory of the Pāṇḍavas over Kauravas. Holtzmann’s theory that the Kauravas were the original heroes of the Epic is not generally accepted.

To the nucleus of the Bhārata War story were added ancient bardic poetry containing legends connected or unconnected with the life of the epic heroes, sacred poetry dealing with numerous myths and legends of Brāhmanical origin, large sections devoted to philosophy and ethics, cosmologies and genealogies in the fashion of the Purāṇas, legends of the Śaiva and Vaishṇava cults and also fables and parables, so that in course of time it acquired an encyclopaedic form.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes it is called the Fifth Veda (*Bhārataṃ pañchamo Vedaḥ*) or after the name of its author the ‘Kṛṣṇaveda’. Now-a-days it is regarded as the Encyclopaedia Indica. It itself claims that “*yadihāsti tad anyatro yan nehāsti na tat kvachit*”—“whatever is (included) there may be found elsewhere; (but) what is not to be found here cannot be got anywhere else.”

Traditionally the *Mbh.* is ascribed to Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, a close relative of the epic heroes. He is also credited with the authorship of the Purāṇas and the compilation of the Vedas.

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Pusalker, A.D., *Studies in the Epics and the Purāṇas*, Intro.; Mehendale, M.A., *AIU*, p. 245; for a detailed study of the historiography in the Vedas, see, Ghoshal, U.N., *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, Ch. I.

<sup>3</sup>*AIU*, p. 245 f.

But the *Mbh.*, as we have it today, was never the work of any one author nor was it written down at one time. In point of form also it is not a single book but a whole literature. According to Macdonell and many others Vyāsa's work, called *Jaya*, contained only 8,800 verse. He taught it to his pupil Vaiśampāyana who recited it at the time of the great snake-sacrifice (*sarpa satra*) of Janamejaya, the great-grandson of Arjuna Pāṇḍava. It was then heard by Sūta Ugrasravas who recited it at the sacrifice of Śaunaka in the Nimisha forest.<sup>1</sup> In course of these two recitals it became enlarged because of the materials added by Vaiśampāyana and Ugrasravas and acquired the form respectively of *Bhārata* (of 24,000 verses) and of *Mahābhārata* (of one lakh verses). In its present form the Epic has over one lakh verses divided into eighteen parvans. Actually, however, this enlargement took place in a period of more than a thousand years extending from the date of the Mahābhārata battle (which took place probably in the 9th century B.C.)<sup>2</sup> to the Gupta age. "Though it is extremely difficult to fix the time when the floating ballads were first fixed into an epic, the epigraphic evidence makes it certain that the *Śatasāhasrī saṁhitā* (=the Epic of one lakh verses) had come into existence by the fifth century A.D." Now-a-days scholars generally accept the view of Winternitz according to whom it "cannot have received its present form earlier than the 4th century B.C. and later than the 4th century A.D."<sup>3</sup>

The *Mbh.* has come down to us in two recensions, the Northern and the Southern. It has been vigorously studied in the modern period by a large number of foreign and Indian scholars.<sup>4</sup> Its critical edition, based on all available manuscripts, has been brought out by the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, under the General Editorship of V.S. Sukthankar (and after his demise under the General Editorship of S.K. Belvalkar). One of the important findings of Sukthankar has been that "in our version of the

<sup>1</sup>Vaidya, P.L., 'The Mahābhārata : Its History and Character', *CHI*, II, p.51 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Goyal, S.R., 'Mahābhārata aurā Dāśarājña Yuddhon ki Tithiyān', *Purākalpa*, 1974, IV, i, pp. 5-12.

<sup>3</sup>*HIL*, I, p. 465; cf. Pargiter, *AIHT*, p. 77; also, *AIU*, p. 251.

<sup>4</sup>For a critical review of the progress of the *Mbh.* studies and the attitude of analytical, synthetic and traditional schools vide Pusalker, A D., *Studies in the Epics and the Purāṇas*, Intro., p. xvii-xxxiv; 82-144; *CHI*, II, p. 57 ff.



Mahābhārata there is a conscious – nay deliberate – weaving together or rather stitching together of the Bhārata legends with the Bhārgava myths”.<sup>1</sup> In other words, for some time the *Mbh.* remained in the hands of the Bhārgava Brāhmaṇas who transformed it by incorporating the myths and legends of their own heroes. It also led to “the incorporation into the epic of large masses of didactic material, concentrated chiefly in the Śānti and Anuśāśana, especially so far as it concerns the Dharma and Nīti elements”.<sup>2</sup>

The *Harivaṃśa* (which means ‘Genealogy of Hari’) which forms an appendix (*khila*) to the *Mbh.*, has more or less gone through the same transformation as the great Epic itself. It contains about 16,000 verses and is also not the work of a single author, nor even of one compiler. It is indeed a collection of legends and myths concerning the glorification of Hari (Vishṇu).

### *Rāmāyaṇa*

The *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is regarded as the *Ādikāvya* or ‘the first ornate poem’ is traditionally ascribed to Vālmīki, the *Ādikavi* or the first author of ornate poetry. He is said to have been a contemporary of Rāma, which is obviously impossible. It is said that Vālmīki wanted to compose a kāvya describing the life of an ideal hero. He himself designates his work as *charita* (biography). Whereas the *Mbh.* has almost lost its epic form, the *Rāmā.* by and large still retains its original character. As pointed out by Mendenhall the sacred character of the *Mbh.* is not so much due to its heroes as to the didactic sections added to it at a later stage; but in the case of the *Rāmā.* the sanctity attached to it is due to the inherent purity of its hero and heroine.<sup>3</sup>

In its present form the *Rāmā.*, now found in two recensions (Southern and Northern), contains seven Kāṇḍas (books) and about 24,000 verses. According to Abhinavagupta, its main *rasa* is *śānta*. Its real story begins with Ayodhyākāṇḍa and ends with Yuddhakāṇḍa. The whole of the Uttarakāṇḍa and most of the Bālakāṇḍa are undoubtedly later accretions, for (i) these two Kāṇḍas contain a number of topics which have no, or very slight,

<sup>1</sup>Sukthankar, V.S., *Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata* (Sukthankar Memorial Edition, I, Poona, 1944), p. 332.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 334. For a brief cultural study of the *Mbh.*, vide Raychaudhuri, H.C., in *CHI*, II, p. 71 f.

<sup>3</sup>*AIU*, p. 252.

connection with the main story; (ii) it is only in these two kāṇḍas, excepting a few interpolated exceptions in Kāṇḍas II-VI that Rāma appears as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, whereas everywhere else he is only a mortal hero; (iii) in the genuine sections the Vedic god Indra, and not Viṣṇu, is given the highest place of honour; (iv) the language and style of these two Kāṇḍas differ from the rest of the Epic, and (v) at the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa is given the *phalaśruti* which indicates that the rest of the material was added later on. It may also be argued that the original epic must have ended with the coronation of Rāma. The *Rāmopākhyāna* of the *Mbh.* also does not carry the story further than that.

The *Rāmā.* in its present form must have existed at least a couple of centuries before the latest date by which the *Mbh.* attained its final form (c. 4th cent. A.D.). But as Sukthankar has shown the nucleus of the *Mbh.* may have existed prior to the nucleus of the *Rāmā.* Pāṇini (5th-4th cent. B.C.) makes allusions to Vāsudeva, Arjuna and Yudhisṭhira; but he is silent about Rāma, and so is Patañjali (2nd cent. B.C.) as well as the inscriptions belonging to the pre-Christian era. According to Mehendale the original *Rāmā.*, in which Rāma was a human being, was composed by Vālmīki in the third or more probably in the fourth century B.C. which, with the addition of Bālakāṇḍa and Yuddhakāṇḍa and some passages in the other Kāṇḍas, assumed its present form at the end of the second century A.D. when Rāma had already been deified as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Interestingly, while describing the crossing of the confluence of Gaṅgā and Soṇa, the author of the *Rāmā.* does not mention the city of Pāṭaliputra, the history of which began in c. 500 B.C. when Ajātaśatru founded the military station of Pāṭaligāma. It probably shows that this part of the Epic may be as early as c. 500 B.C., or even older.

The *Rāmā.* has deeply influenced the religious and moral thought of India for over two thousand years. According to Macdonell, "probably no work of world literature, secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the *Rāmāyaṇa.*"<sup>1</sup> It is regarded sacred specially by the Vaiṣṇavas because they look upon Rāma as the incarnation of Viṣṇu. According to many scholars its story is an amalgamation of two, three or even four different elements namely the palace

<sup>1</sup>ERE, X, p. 574.



intrigue resulting in the exile of Rāma, abduction of Sītā, legends about Rāvaṇa and legends about Hanumāna and monkey-worship. According to these views the exile of Rāma is the only element in the story which has a historical basis. The controversy regarding the location of Laṅkā of Rāvaṇa<sup>1</sup> and the absence of definite archaeological evidence throwing light on the story of Rāma have added to the confusion. Since the days of Lassen, who may be said to have inaugurated the *Rāmāyaṇa* studies,<sup>2</sup> down to the present day a host of scholars including Weber, Hopkins, Winternitz, Jacobi, D.C. Sen, Dahlmann, K.T. Telang, C.V. Vaidya, Hopkins, A.D. Pusalker, C. Bulcke,<sup>3</sup> H.D. Sankalia, B.B. Lal, etc. have thrown light on the various facets of the *Rāmāyaṇa* problem. We cannot go into details of the views of the various scholars but mention may here be made of the fact that now most of the scholars (1) reject Weber's theory that the *Daśaratha Jātaka* was the source of the *Rāmā.* story; most of them do not believe that the entire story of the *Rāmā.* is allegorical and that (3) at least the story of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa is basically historical.<sup>4</sup> Bulcke and Pusalker<sup>5</sup> even believe that the *Rāmā.* is a complete unit and that the framework of its entire story (short of its supernatural elements), including the portions which portray Rāma as an avtāra of Viṣṇu, is historical. According to Pusalker<sup>6</sup> the incorporation of didactic material, ethics, philosophy, etc. was done under the Bhārgava influence which was also responsible for the transformation of the *Bhārata* into the *Mahābhārata.*<sup>7</sup> In its present

<sup>1</sup>For the various views on the identification of Laṅkā see Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas*, p. 191 f.

<sup>2</sup>For detailed history of the *Rāmāyaṇa* studies vide Pusalker, A.D., *op. cit.*, Intro., p. xxxix f.; p. 174-95.

<sup>3</sup>C. Bulcke's *Rāmakathā* in Hindi is perhaps the best work for the analysis of the various elements and episodes of the story of Rāma.

<sup>4</sup>For the study of the story of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa vide Goyal, S.R., 'Succession Problem in the Vālmikiya Rāmāyaṇa' *Readings in History*, ed. by K.S. Lal, pp. 49-79.

<sup>5</sup>Pusalker, A.D., 'Rāmāyaṇa : Its History and Character', *CHI*, II, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup>We beg to disagree. The reference to the Bhārgavas are remarkably few in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. About Bhṛgu the only thing recorded is that his wife was decapitated by Viṣṇu. Chyavana is mentioned only to narrate some stories and Paraśurāma to be worsened at the hands of Rāma Dāśarathi. Jamadgni is also mentioned only as a victim of Arjuna Kārtavīrya. Cf. Sukthankar, V S, *Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata*, p. 332.



form it claims to deal with dharma, artha and kāma also (*dharma-kamā-ratha saṁhitām*).

### *Bhagvadgītā*

Of all the religio-philosophical portions of the *Mbh.* the *Bhagvadgītā* (Song of the Lord), usually called the *Gītā*, is indubitably of the highest merit and the most popular. It is a part of the Bhishmaparvan of the *Mbh.* Lokmanya Tilak calls it 'a most luminous and priceless gem which makes us masters of spiritual wisdom'. Madan Mohan Malaviya saw in it a unique synthesis of 'the highest knowledge, the purest love and the most luminous action'. Mahatma Gandhi calls it 'the universal mother whose door is wide open to anyone who knocks'.<sup>1</sup>

The *Gītā* has become in the last hundred and fifty years the subject of numerous editions, translations, commentaries and discussions. Now-a days more than 5,000 Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Gītā* are available, 314 being in the Sarasvati Bhavan Library of Banaras alone.<sup>2</sup> For a long time it was handed down orally. The oldest commentary now available is that of Śaṅkara, but it hints at the existence of five or six older commentaries which he intended to criticise. They were probably *jñānakarmasamuchchayavādin* in approach.<sup>3</sup> After Śaṅkara hundreds of *bhāṣyas* and *ṭīkāś* on the *Gītā* were written by the exponents of the various philosophical schools—monists, dualists, qualified monists, pure monists etc., to draw confirmation of their own views from it. Among the more famous *bhāṣyas* of post-Śaṅkara period are those of Rāmānuja, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and Śrīdhara.<sup>4</sup> Callewaert and Shilanand

<sup>1</sup>According to A.C. Banquet, O Malley, C.F. Andrews and Agehananda Bharati the *Gītā* was largely forgotten and acquired significance in modern times when it was projected as an important text by the leaders of the Hindu renaissance. But it attracted the attention of these leaders because it was a popular work and suited their ideological orientation (cf. Arvind Sharma, 'On the Significance of the Bhagvadgītā' in *Studies in Religion and Change*, 1983, ed. by Madhu Sen, p. 58).

<sup>2</sup>Callewaert, W.N., and Shilananda, Hemraj, *Bhagavadgītānūvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation*, Ranchi, 1983, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88 f.

<sup>4</sup>Sarkar, M.N., 'The Bhagavad-gītā : Its Early Commentaries', *CHI*, II, pp. 195-203. A.C. Banquet believed that the *Gītā* acquired significance because Śaṅkara wrote a commentary on it. But Śaṅkara wrote a commentary on it because it was an important text, the Smṛti Prasthāna of the Vedānta (see below).

enumerate 249 Sanskrit tikās at one place.<sup>1</sup> Apart from these, several works giving synopses of the *Bhagavadgītā* and describing its glory (*Gītā mātmya*) are also found.<sup>2</sup> Jñānadeva's *Bhāvartha-dīpikā* in 9,000 stanzas was the first vernacular commentary.

The *Gītā* was imitated by numerous later Sanskrit authors. Scholars have noticed a large number of tracts of varying lengths composed in verse form to which the title '*Gītā*' is given. Sixteen of them are contained in the *Mahābhārata* itself (the most famous of them being the *Anugītā*), twenty are found in the various Purāṇas and similar works (the most famous of them being the *Sūrya Gītā*, *Rāma Gītā*, *Devī Gītā* and *Gaṇeśa Gītā*) and four exist as independent works.<sup>3</sup>

In the Mughal age the *Bhagavadgītā* was translated into Persian. Now it is found translated into 75 major languages of the world. Warren Hastings wrote the Preface of the first English translation of *Gītā* rendered by Wilkins in which he prophesied that the *Gītā* would last "when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist".<sup>4</sup>

In the last hundred and fifty years a large number of Indians (e.g. K.T. Telang, B.G. Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, S.K. Belvalkar, S. Radhakrishnan, V.S. Agrawala, D.D. Vadekar, V.G. Rele, S.K. De, T.M.P. Mahadevan, D.S. Sharma, S.C. Roy, etc.) as well as foreign scholars (e.g. Otto Schrader, Hopkins, R. Otto, R. Garbe, Edgerton, Hill, A.W. Ryder, E.J. Thomas, J. Charpentier, Kirfel, etc.) have done tremendous work in the field of text-history and translations of and commentary-writing and discussion on the *Gītā*. For a detailed history of the *Gītā* studies readers are advised to consult the resume given by A.D. Pusalker.<sup>5</sup>

### *Problems Connected with the Gītā*

The *Gītā* is a part of the Bhīshmaparvan of the *Mbh.* and, as we have seen, the *Mbh.* took more than one thousand years in

<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 98-100.

<sup>2</sup>Aiyar, B.L. Parameswar, 'Imitations of the Bhagavadgītā and Later Gītā Literature', in *CHI*, II, pp. 204-222.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Sharma, Arvind, 'On the Significance of the Bhagavadgītā' in *Studies in Religion and Change*, 1983, ed. by Madhu Sen, pp. 56-72.

<sup>5</sup>Pusalker, A.D., *Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas*, pp. 144-175. Cf. also the work of Callewaert the Shilanand mentioned above.

acquiring the present form of *Śatasāhasrī saṁhitā*. Therefore it is not at all easy to determine the date of the *Gītā*. For the sake of easy discussion and clarity we may divide the entire issue into three parts: (a) Is the *Gītā* a genuine part of the *Mbh.*? (b) Has it undergone any additions and alterations at different times? and (c) What dates can we assign to its present form and its earlier versions, if any?

*Place of Gītā in the Mbh.*

The genuineness of the *Gītā* as a portion of the *Mbh.* is doubted by some such as Talboys Wheeler<sup>1</sup> mainly on the ground that it appears incongruous and irrelevant to enter into a long moral and spiritual dialogue at the commencement of the war (*pravṛtte śastrasampāte*). But, firstly, this objection assumes that the *Gītā* was composed in the battle-field of the Bhārata war itself, which is nobody's contention. It is like assuming that all the dialogues of the *Mbh.* are the same which its characters actually spoke. Secondly, there are references to the *Gītā* in the *Mbh.* itself which clearly indicate that from the time of the composition of the *Mbh.* the *Gītā* has been a genuine constituent of it.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, after a detailed comparison of the *Gītā* and the *Mbh.*, K.T. Telang and G.B. Tilak have shown that the two works have similar uses of ancient words and combinations (*sandhis*) which were not approved by Pāṇini.<sup>3</sup> Fourthly, the Bhāgavata dharma of the other parts of the *Mbh.* and of the *Gītā* holds in common the views that worship of any god goes ultimately to Keśava or Vāsudeva, that the renunciation of the world is not desirable, that everyone should contribute to the revolving wheel of the world-order (*saṁsāra chakra*) by performing one's own duty (*svadharma*), that there are four kinds of devotees, etc.<sup>4</sup> These facts very strongly suggest that the present *Gītā* has been a genuine part of the *Mbh.*

Now in view of the three stage evolution of the *Mbh.* discussed above the question arises to which form of the Epic—*Jaya*, *Bhārata* and *Mahābhārata*—does the *Gītā* belong? According to

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, I, p. 523; *CHI*, II, p. 138 f.

<sup>2</sup>Upadhyaya, K.N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 6 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

Belvalkar,<sup>1</sup> the editor of the critical edition of the *Gītā*, there are parts in the present *Mbh.* that presuppose and hence are later than the *Gītā*. Then there are stanzas, half stanzas and quarter stanzas from all parts of the *Gītā* which are found quoted everywhere in the Epic. Further, there are a few adaptations and abridgements of the *Gītā* found in the Epic, the chief of them being the *Anugītā*. Therefore, it must be concluded that the *Gītā* had become a part of the Epic long before the latter assumed its present *Śatasāhasri-samhitā* form. In this connection it is significant to note that the critical edition of the *Mbh.* mentioned above contains the *Gītā* also.

### *Theory of the Gradual Evolution of the Gītā*

The second part of our investigation is whether or not the *Gītā* has undergone any additions and alteration? Many early scholars such as K.M. Ganguli believed that the *Gītā* has come down to us without interpolations.<sup>2</sup> And it is true also that the *Gītā*, as it exists today, is found everywhere in the country almost in the same form; since the days of Śaṅkara it is universally regarded as containing seven hundred verses—which is its present bulk also. The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona prepared the critical text of the *Gītā* by collecting the readings from sixty manuscripts written in various Indian scripts. These and 160 other manuscripts which were available to the editors reveal that the variants in the readings of the *Gītā* are quite minor both quantitatively and the qualitatively. Even the 14 additional verses and 4 half verses found in the Kashmirian recension discovered by Schrader have been proved to be insignificant by Belvalkar.<sup>3</sup> Actually, as the *Gītā* acquired great sanctity quite early and came to be recited daily by countless Hindus, it did not remain easy for anybody to make interpolations in it.

But, despite the fact that the *Gītā* is now found in the same form in which it was known to Śaṅkara, many scholars believe that the present text of the *Gītā* is not 'original'; that before the present *Gītā* came into existence there existed a smaller *Gītā* which

<sup>1</sup>*CHI*, II, p. 136. f.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Callewaert and Shilanand, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. also Pusalker, *op. cit.*, p. 144 ff; cf. Majumdar, B.B., *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 36.



was elaborated into the present 'composite' work. The present *Gītā*, according to these scholars, does not contain a consistent philosophical or religious argument and shows clear traces of being remodelled at different times. According to Hopkins<sup>1</sup> it is a Kṛṣṇaite version of an older Viṣṇuite text and that in turn was at first an unsectarian work, perhaps a late Upanishad. Holtzmann believed that the present *Gītā* is a Viṣṇuite revision of a pantheistic poem.<sup>2</sup> Garbe thought that the original *Gītā* was written as a theistic tract based on the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, though later on it was adapted by the upholders of the Upanishadic monism.<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Otto followed his teacher Garbe and dissected from the *Gītā* what he considered as inserted by people later on 'with the view of securing for it the authenticity of Kṛṣṇa's Divine form'.<sup>4</sup> Winternitz also once accepted Garbe's theory. However in the English version of his *History of Indian Literature* he abandoned it, though he was still inclined to dissect the *Gītā* to discover its original form.<sup>5</sup> Many other scholars including K.T. Telang and Edgerton subscribe to the progressive evolution theory.

But the theory that the *Gītā* presents a philosophy which was the result of gradual growth is contrary to the Indian thinking. As pointed out by Belvalkar the theory of gradual growth was particularly welcome to those who believed in the theory of Christian impact on Bhāgavatism because it gave them scope to believe that the influence of the *Bible* was felt atleast in the second stage of the evolution of the *Gītā*.<sup>6</sup> As regards the 'reconstruction' of the hypothetical original *Gītā* by Otto and others, Belvalkar etc. have shown that such attempts are too subjective to be given any serious consideration.<sup>7</sup> In opposition to the theory that the *Gītā* presents a compilation of various views, which is sought to be made dignified by the appellation 'critical' and 'scholarly', Belvalkar, alongwith Dahlmann, Tilak, Poussin etc., feels that the *Gītā* is not only a poem with a unitary teaching but presents a deliberate and well-formulated philosophical synthesis of originally divergent

<sup>1</sup>Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*HIL*, I, p. 436.

<sup>6</sup>*CHI*, II, p. 138.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 138 ff.; *Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures*, pp. 89-105.



views, synthesized into an organic whole by some master-thinker in order to meet his contemporary social and religious situation.<sup>1</sup>

Actually most Indian scholars do not subscribe to the evolution theory. They point out that the inconsistencies in the *Gītā* are more apparent than real. Any one with an insight into the nature of early Indian texts can at once see that Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vedānta, etc., in the senses they occur in the *Gītā* are not as mutually incompatible as they appear to be in the light of the subsequently developed philosophical systems of those names. As pointed out by Deussen, like the Upanishads in the *Gītā* we have unarranged and non-systematised ideas without any attempt at scientific definition and classification which we find in the later systematic works. Therefore it is better to assume that the present *Gītā* is the original *Gītā* though in view of the apparent evolution of the *Mbh.* of which *Gītā* is a part it may be admitted that some interpolations might have taken place in this poem as well.<sup>2</sup> But these could not have been so substantial and radical in nature as scholars like Telang, Garbe, Otto, etc. ask us to believe.

#### *Date of the Gītā*

The problem of the date of the *Gītā* has been rendered difficult mainly because of those scholars who have tried to determine the chronology of its various layers postulated by them. Talboys Wheeler regards it evidently a product of a Brāhmaṇical age and presumably also a later age.<sup>3</sup> According to Garbe the original *Gītā* belongs to 200 B.C. and its present form to 200 A.D.<sup>4</sup> K.T. Telang believed that the latest date at which the *Gītā* can have been composed 'must be earlier than the 3rd century B.C., though it is altogether impossible to say at present how much earlier'. Douglas P. Hill thought that the internal evidence points to the second century B.C., as the period when the *Gītā* in its present form appeared.<sup>5</sup> R.G. Bhandarkar opined that *Gītā* is at least as old as the fourth century B.C.<sup>6</sup> B.G. Tilak tried to establish that the *Gītā* must

<sup>1</sup>CHI, II, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Belvalkar, *Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>*History of India*, I, p. 288. Quoted by Upadhyaya, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted by Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>SBE, VIII, pp. 21 and 34.

<sup>6</sup>*The Original Gītā*, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>*Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religions Systems*, p. 13.

have been in existence in its present form at least in 500 B.C.<sup>1</sup> According to Radhakrishnan also it may be assigned to the 5th century B.C.<sup>2</sup> though the text may have received many alterations in subsequent times.

We feel that in the discussion on the date of the present *Gītā* the following facts deserve special consideration:

(1) The *Gītā* was composed in the atmosphere of the later Upanishads. It uses their language, discusses the same problems and even calls itself an Upanishad (*Bhagavadgītāsū Upanishatsu*). Its nearness with *Īśa* and *Chhāndogya Upanishads* is quite remarkable (*infra*). (2) It knows Sāṃkhya and Yoga, but not in their classical form. (3) It knows Bhāgavatism and is regarded as a basic work of this religion; it also discusses the doctrine of *bhakti* quite explicitly which the Upanishads do not do. But it is unaware of the doctrines of the Vyūhas and the Pañchavīras. (4) It does not refer to the Buddha or Buddhism though uses the term Brahma-nirvāṇa. However, according to Belvalkar here the term *nirvāṇa* has been used in the technical sense of the pre-Buddhist 'Kāla' philosophy.<sup>3</sup> (5) Baudhāyana in his *Gṛhyasūtra* (II. 22.9) clearly considers the *Gītā* as an authority, for not only he quotes *Gītā* IX.26 but also uses an honorific reference to it: 'So the Lord has said' (*Tadāha Bhagavān*). (6) Several references to the *Gītā* are found in the '*Brahmasūtra* under the name 'Smṛti'. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhava etc. agree in most of the cases that by the term 'Smṛti' the author of the *Brahmasūtra* refers to the *Gītā*. But the value of this evidence is marred by the fact that the *Gītā* itself refers to the *Brahmasūtra* in its verse XIII.4. This mutual reference could have been caused by later additions in either or both the works. It has also been suggested that presumably the *Gītā* as well as the *Brahmasūtra* are the works of the same author.<sup>4</sup> This view is in keeping with the tradition also, which ascribes both of them to Vyāsa. In this connection mention is also made of the *Bhikshusūtra* of Pārāśarya referred to by Pāṇini. According to some, we know of no other Pārāśarya (son of Parāśara) than Vyāsa and no other Sūtra work than the *Brahmasūtra* composed by him. It has also been suggested that the *Brahmasūtra* quoted by the *Gītā*

<sup>1</sup>*Gītā Rahasya*, App., p. 270.

<sup>2</sup>*Ind. Phil.*, I, p. 524.

<sup>3</sup>*CHI*, II, p. 156, n. 83.

<sup>4</sup>Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 26 ff.



was a text of pre-Bādarāyaṇa period, for several works of this name must have been in existence by the time the *Gītā* was composed.<sup>1</sup> Which one of these suggestions is correct it is difficult to say, but taking all these facts into consideration it may be regarded as not very much wide of mark to assume that the *Gītā* and the *Brahma sūtra* both were composed some time between 500 and 400 B.C. when Buddhism had begun to emerge as a powerful movement, the age of the Upanishads was towards its close, the Sūtra works were being composed, and Bhāgavatism and Sāṃkhya and Yoga had not acquired their classical form. As regards their relative chronology is really difficult to say which of these two works is earlier, but in view of the facts noted above it is just possible that the *Gītā* was composed earlier than the *Brahmasūtra*.

### *Sources of the Gītā : Gītā's Relation with the Vedas*

In the pre-Buddhist age the Vedic speculation took, broadly speaking, three alternative lines: (i) the ritualistic line of orthodox tradition (*karma-mārga*); (ii) the radically anti-ritualistic line of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*); and (iii) a line compromising these two (*jñānakarmasamuchchaya-mārga*). How much does the *Gītā* owe to the orthodox Vedic ritualistic tradition is problematical. The *Gītā* does not reject the authority of the Vedas, but at the

<sup>1</sup>The context of the *Gītā* verse (XIII.4) where the references to the *Brahma-sūtra* occurs, makes it quite clear that in the second half of that stanza the word *rshibhiḥ*, 'by sages', has to be supplied. It means that here the *Gītā* is not alluding to any one specific *Brahmasūtra* (like the one which has come down to us), but to several such Sūtra works by more than one author. As pointed out by Belvalkar, as the different Vedic schools have their own separate *Śrauta*-, *Gṛhya*- and *Dharma-sūtras*, there is no *a priori* reason why at least some of them should not have had their own distinct *Brahmasūtras*. The facts that the extant *Brahmasūtra* refers to the views of at least six predecessors of Bādarāyaṇa and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali states that Kāśakṛtsna wrote some treatise on *Mīmāṃsā* (which must have covered the whole field of our extant *Pūrva*- and *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā sūtras*) support it. The same is probably true of Āśmarathya, Auḍulomi and Bādari, judging from the contexts in which these names are referred to in both the *Jaiminīsūtra* and the *Vedāntasūtra*. And if some texts under the name of *Brahmasūtra* existed before Bādarāyaṇa, there remains no necessity to place the *Gītā* after Bādarāyaṇa simply because it mentions the *Brahmasūtra* by name (cf. Belvalkar, S.K., *Shree Gopal Basu Malik Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 140). It may, however, be noted that this argument merely opens up the possibility that the *Brahmasūtra* mentioned by the *Gītā* might have been the work of pre-Bādarāyaṇa period; it does not prove the point conclusively.

same time does not accept Vedic ritualism as means of salvation. According to the *Gītā*, Moksha can be attained by the knowledge of ātman, not by the performance of the yajñas. The exalted character of the Vedic gods is also not accepted. Some scholars have argued that it owes its treatment of *yajña* to *RV* itself. Sometimes *RV* 117.6 is quoted by the writers on the *Gītā* while expounding the doctrine of *yajñārtha karman* (karman for the sake of *yajña*). Likewise the Ṛbhus of the *RV* who attained divine status through karman are said to have been the prototype of the karmayogins of the *Gītā*.<sup>1</sup> One writer has even gone to the extent of finding the embryo of the whole structure of the *Gītā* in the *RV* (VI.9).<sup>2</sup>

The *Gītā*'s reaction to the Vedic heritage is one of progressive assumption and integration of *yajña* into an entirely new world-view and new ethics.<sup>3</sup> Its Chapter IV gives the name of *yajña* to ascetic exercises, *yaugika* exercises and even to concentration and knowledge. Ch. XVII classifies *yajña* according to pre-ponderance in it of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. And finally the devotee is called upon to do all he does in the spirit of worship to Kṛṣṇa, for Kṛṣṇa is indeed Brahman and Brahman is identical with *yajña*.<sup>4</sup> In *Gītā* II. 42-43 it is said that those who are devoted to the letter of the Vedas and look upon heaven as the supreme goal are unwise. They merely utter flowery speech (*pushpitā vācam*) recommending many acts of various kinds for the attainment of pleasure and prosperity with rebirth as their fruit. *Gītā*'s attitude to the Vedic *karmakāṇḍa* becomes explicit by II.46 which, according to the translation of Tilak, states : "A person having the most perfect knowledge of Brahman has as much necessity for all the Vedas (i.e. the Vedic Kāmya Karmans) as (people have) for a well when all around there is (natural) water that has rushed in (to them)". This verse clearly establishes the uselessness of the Vedic kām्यakarmans for those who practise nishkāma karman.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Singh, S.P., 'Embryo of the Bhagavadgītā in the Rgveda', *Bhāratī*, 5, Pt. 1, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 86-90.

<sup>3</sup>Jordens, J.T.F., 'Yajña in the Bhagavadgītā', *Asian Studies*, Philippines, III, No. 2, 1965 (Quoted in *PJ*, IV, 2), pp. 283-92.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Hazra, R.C., 'The Interpretation of a Verse of Bhagavadgītā', *ABORI*, 1955, p. 141-9.

*Gītā and the Upanishads*

"The debt of the *Gītā* to the *Upaniṣads* is as clear as its originality. The *Chāndogya* tells us that Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra was instructed by Ghora Aṅgīrasa and the identification of this Kṛṣṇa with the Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* is natural and uncontradicted by any serious evidence. The echoes of the *Īśa* and *Kaṭha* are similarly plain in the *Gītā*".<sup>1</sup> There cannot be two opinions therefore about it that the *Gītā* is the epitome of the Upanishads. According to an ancient verse, it is the immortalizing milk (*dugdham Gītāmṛtam mahat*) of the Upanishadic cows (*sarvopanishado gāvo*) milked by Kṛṣṇa (*dogdhā Gopālanandanah* for the sake of Arjuna, the calf (*Pārtho vatsah sudhirbhoktā*). As pointed out by K.N. Upadhyaya the concept of the eternity and immortality of Atman, the absoluteness and transcendence of Brahman, its negative and paradoxical characterisation, the references to the supreme nature of God (*Patamātmā*), the symbolic meditation of 'Om' (*Śabda-Brahman*), the description of the two pathways of Pitṛyāna and Devayāna, the theory of the ultimate unity behind the multiplicity of the world, an abiding and imperishable element behind the impermanent and perishing features of it, the nature and the state of Brahma nirvāṇa and the ideal conduct of *sthita-prajña*—in short, most of the metaphysical elements of the *Gītā* are drawn from the Upanishads. Many of the verses of the *Gītā* literally or with some variations, are taken from the Upanishads. Besides, there are numerous short passages, words and expressions which clearly seem to have been borrowed from them.<sup>2</sup> Many of the *Gītā* imageries also are quite similar to those of the Upanishads. Some of the stray ideas of the Upanishads are brought into focus and propounded prominently in the *Gītā* for the first time. This may be illustrated by referring to its distinctive doctrines of devotion (*bhakti*) and disinterested action (*nishkāma karman*). But for the *Śvetāśvatara*, which Barth describes as a kind of Śaivite *Bhagavadgītā*, no other Upanishad has that pronounced tone of *bhakti* as is found in the *Gītā*. Similarly, the doctrine of *nishkāma karman*, though hinted at here and there in the Upanishads was nowhere given that

<sup>1</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision and Symbolic Forms in Ancient India*, 1984, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Upadhyaya, K.N., *op. cit.*, p. 109. Upadhyaya has given a detailed list of such similar passages and ideas (pp. 110-14).



prominence which is given to it in the *Gītā*. Therefore, the above quoted verse describing the *Gītā* as the milk of the Upanishadic cows should be taken only in a very general sense.

#### *Elements of Sāṃkhya-Yoga in the Gītā*

In the *Gītā*, the fundamental tenets of the Sāṃkhya system are combined with those of Vedānta and interwoven in its metaphysical scheme. The nature of Prakṛti and Puruṣa, their relation causing the world-process, the nature and function of the three guṇas, the twenty-four principles together with Puruṣa as the twenty-fifth, and the discriminative knowledge of Prakṛti and Puruṣa leading to emancipation—all are accepted and assimilated in the *Gītā*.<sup>1</sup> However as it admits absolute supremacy of the non-dual Brahman it does not regard Puruṣa and Prakṛti as two ultimate and independent entities, but considers them as only two forms, higher and lower, of the same Reality (VII.4.6).<sup>2</sup>

The term 'yoga' is also not used in the *Gītā* in its strict technical sense. In the system of Patañjali yoga is defined as 'the restraint of the mental operations' (*chitta-vṛtti-nirodha*), but in the *Gītā* it is loosely used in many senses—in the sense of the disinterested or selfless discharge of one's duty, in the sense of 'complete self-surrender' to god which presupposes a similar disinterested discharge of action in the name of God, in the sense of wondrous powers (Yogamāyā) of God, and in its technical sense of controlling the mental operations and practising concentration, as found in the Pātañjala yoga philosophy. It may also be remembered that as the *Gītā* is mostly found dominated by the Vedāntic ideas, it always seems anxious to subordinate the atheistic and dualistic ideas of Sāṃkhya along with the method of Yoga under the theistic and non-dualistic philosophy of Vedānta.

#### *Gītā and Buddhism*

The question of the Buddhist influence on the *Gītā* is not so easy to decide. Indian scholars like K.T. Telang, R.G. Bhandarkar, B.G. Tilak, R.D. Ranade, S. Radhakrishnan, etc. are not inclined to see any Buddhist influence on the *Gītā*. Garbe remarks

<sup>1</sup>Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 117.

that "Buddhist influence might be regarded as very much doubtful, resting at most on very far-fetched reasons". According to Radhakrishnan the *Gītā* does not show any borrowing from Buddhism. Senart was of the opinion that Buddhism itself was influenced by the doctrine of devotion to Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. Comparing the two religions, he says that 'the affinities are undeniable' and 'Buddhism is undoubtedly the borrower'. According to K.N. Upadhyaya, however, there are some pointed statements made in the *Gītā*, which seem to counter those of the Nikāyas. The term 'nirvāṇa' used five times in the *Gītā* may also be taken as indication of Buddhistic influence on it.<sup>2</sup> But as noted above other scholars do not agree with this view.

*Purāṇas : Chronology, Authorship, Classification, etc.*

The species of Indian literature known as *Purāṇa*, from which 'Paurāṇika' religion derives its name, reaches back to great antiquity. It is mentioned, mostly in connection with Itihāsa, in such early works as the *Atharvaveda*, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Jaiminīya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa*, *Bṛhadāranyaka Upanishad*, *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, *Taittirīya Āranyaka*, *Śāṅkhāyana Śraūta-sūtra* and *Gautama Dharmasūtra*. According to the *Atharvaveda* and the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upa.* the 'Purāṇa' had as much a sacred origin as the Vedas. According to the *Chhāndogya Upa.* *Itihāsa-Purāṇa* is fifth in point of importance besides the four Vedas (*Itihāsapurāṇaḥ pañchamo Vedānām*). The *Mbh.* propounds the dictum that the meaning of the Vedas should be elaborated in the light of the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa. *Itihāsa purāṇābhyām Vedam samupabṛmha-yet*.<sup>3</sup> This traditionally sacred character has been retained by the Purāṇa literature even to the present day though it never attained the position of 'Śruti', being always recognised as Smṛti.<sup>4</sup>

The Purāṇas themselves state their number to be eighteen.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*IHQ*, VI, p. 672.

<sup>2</sup>Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 128 ff; Cf.; Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'Some Religious Concepts Common to the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagvadgītā* and Jainism', *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, XXIV, Nos. 1-4, 1964, pp. 32-40.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Bhattacharya, S., 'An Exposition of the Vedas', *Bhāratī*, Varanasi, No. 7, Pt. I and II, pp. 58-63 for an interpretation of this dictum.

<sup>4</sup>Hazra, R.C., *Purāṇic Records of Hindu Rites and Customs*, p. 1 f.

<sup>5</sup>According to another tradition there were twenty-six Purāṇas (*śaḍviṃśati Purāṇānām*). The eighteen Purāṇas are supposed to contain 4 lakh (*Chatur-laksha*) verses.

The *Padma P.* classifies them into three groups: the *Vishṇu*, *Nārada*, *Bhāgavata*, *Garuḍa*, *Padma* and *Varāha* are Vishṇuite *sāttvika* Purāṇas and as such lead to salvation; the *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Brahmavai-varta*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Bhaviṣya*, *Vāmana*, and *Brahma* are the *rājasa* texts devoted to Brahmā and secure only heaven for their readers; and the *Matsya*, *Kūrma*, *Liṅga*, *Śiva*, *Skanda* and *Agni* are Śaivite *tāmasa* texts. Surprisingly these are regarded as leading to hell.

According to P.V. Kane the Purāṇas may be classified into four categories viz. (1) encyclopaedic like *Agni*, *Garuḍa*, etc. (ii) those dealing mainly with tīrthas such as *Padma* and *Nāradiya*, (iii) sectarian such as *Liṅga*, *Vāmana*, etc. and (iv) historical, such as *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa*, etc.<sup>1</sup>

There has developed a large mass of literature on the various aspects of the Purāṇic studies. A.D. Pusalker and P.V. Kane<sup>2</sup> have given a detailed resume of the important contributions made by foreign and Indian savants.

The Purāṇas are generally ascribed to Vyāsa (*ashṭādaśa purāṇāni kṛtvā Satyavatīsutah*), but other traditions are also found in the Purāṇas themselves.<sup>3</sup> According to *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Vishṇu* Vyāsa entrusted the Purāṇa saṁhitā to Sūta whose three disciples Kāśyapa, Sāvarṇi and Vamśapāyana prepared three new Purāṇa saṁhitās. All these four Saṁhitās had four thousand verses each. The personality of Sūta is somewhat an enigma in the Purāṇas and the *Mbh.* The word *sūta* means 'charioteer' and also 'a person of mixed pratiloma caste born of the union of Brāhmaṇa female with a Kshatriya male'. The later authors of the Purāṇas obviously could not believe that the great sages like Śaunaka learnt the Purāṇas from a person of low caste. They therefore invented the story of his divine character which, according to Kane, we need not believe.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, *HD*, V, ii, p. 842.

<sup>2</sup>Pusalker, A.D., *Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas*, p. 197 ff.; Kane, P.V., *op. cit.*, V, Pt. ii, p. 843 f., 883.

<sup>3</sup>According to *Vishṇu P.* Parāśara obtained the boon of becoming the author of the Purāṇa (*Purāṇasāṁhitākartā*). According to the *Devibhāgavata* the *Śaura Pūrāṇa* was said by Parāśara (*Parāśaraproktaṁ*). According to another tradition the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and the *Varāha Purāṇas* were composed by Mārkaṇḍeya, the *Agni Purāṇa* by Aṅgirā, the *Liṅga* and *Brahmāṇḍa* by Taṇḍin and the *Bhaviṣya* by Mahādeva.

<sup>4</sup>Kane, *HD*, V, Pt. ii, p. 864.



Anyway, the original authors of the Purāṇas, like those of the Epics, were the Sūta or bards, Sūtas Lomaharshaṇa or his son Ugraśravas (the Sauti) being their idealized representative. Later on, however, the Purāṇas fell into the hands of ordinary temple-priests who were not well educated. They added to the Purāṇas a great deal of new material which served their own ends.

The theory of the existence of one original *Purāṇa saṁhitā* has been supported by A.M.T. Jackson, A. Blau and F.E. Pargiter.<sup>1</sup> Pargiter further believed that the original Saṁhitā was the creation of the Kshatriya tradition while the Vedas were the product of the priestly Brāhmaṇa class. Probably the tradition that there are 12,000 verses in the Purāṇa (*dvādaśaiva sahasrāṇi*) indicates its volume. But in the absence of the supposed original *Purāṇa Saṁhitā* such speculations cannot be evaluated.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it is quite obvious that more Purāṇas than one had come into existence long before the birth of Christ. In the *Saṁhitās* of Manu and Yājñavalkya and in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, the word 'purāṇa' has been used in plural. The *Mbh.* speaks of a 'Purāṇa' proclaimed by Vāyu while the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* quotes a passage from a '*Bhavishyat Purāṇa*'. As the term *purāṇa* means 'old narrative' the contradiction in title '*Bhavishyat Purāṇa*' is obvious and indicates that in Āpastamba's time "the term 'Purāṇa' had become. . . . merely the designation of a particular class of books. It would have required the existence of a number of books called Purāṇas to produce that change, and manifestly they must have had their own special names to distinguish from one another, and so convert their common title Purāṇa into a class designation".<sup>3</sup> However, it does not mean that all the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas had come into being in such an early period. It is true that the eighteen Purāṇas are mentioned in the Svargārohaṇa parvan of the *Mbh.* and in the *Harivaṁśa*, but both these texts in their final form cannot be placed with confidence earlier than 400 A.D. Actually none of the Purāṇas may be assigned to the pre-Gupta age in its present form.

A very old definition of Purāṇa, contained in the *Amarakośa* and in most of extant Purāṇas says that a Purāṇa is to have five

<sup>1</sup>CHI, II, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup>Kane rejects the theory of the existence of one original Purāṇa (*HD*, V, ii, p. 829).

<sup>3</sup>Pargiter, *AIHT*, p. 50 f.

characteristics (*lakṣhaṇas*) : (1) creation (*Sarga*), (2) re-creation (*Pratisarga*), (3) genealogy of gods and sages (*Vamśa*), (4) cosmic cycles (*Manvantara*), and (5) accounts of royal dynasties (*Vamśānu-charita*). All these characteristics had their roots in the *ākhyānas* (tales), *upākhyānas* (anecdotes), *gāthās* (songs) and *kalpoktis* (lore that had come down through ages), which were used, according to the *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vāyu* and *Vishṇu*, by Vyāsa in compiling the original Purāṇa.<sup>1</sup> However, in most of the extant Purāṇas these five *lakṣhaṇas* are neglected partially or totally and great importance has been given to religious and social topics. Even in the Purāṇas, which deal with five topics, there are chapter on social customs and institutions—Varṇāśramadharma, āchāra, śrāddha, prayaścitta, dāna, pūjā, vrata, tīrthas, pūrtadharma, pratishṭhā, dīkshā, utsarga, etc. and on the glories of various deities. “Thus the present Purāṇas have practically turned into Smṛti-codes”.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this transformation people of the later ages thought that the above-mentioned five characteristics were meant for the Upapurāṇas whereas the Mahāpurāṇas were to have not less than ten characteristics (*daśabhirlakṣhaṇairyuktam*) relating to cosmogony, religion and society. Consequently, on the one hand, the genealogies of kings and sages were little cared for, and on the other, sections on glories of deities holy places and such other topics composed by different authors at different times were freely incorporated. Some Purāṇas were even converted into encyclopaedic works by incorporating chapters not only on religious and social matters but also on law, politics, poetics, grammar, medicine, music, dancing and sculpture. According to Hazra “there were two main stages in the devnlopment of the Purāṇic Smṛti materials. In the first stage, which covered a period ranging approximately from the beginning of the third to the end of the fifth century A.D., the Purāṇas dealt only with those topics on Hindu rites and customs which formed the subject matter of the early Smṛti such as those of Manu and Yājñavalkya. But in the second stage, which began from about the beginning of the sixth century

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 4; Dandekar, R.N., in *CHI*, II. p. 242. Hazra also believes ('The Aśvamedha, the Common Source of Origin of the Purāṇa Pañcha-Lakṣaṇa and the Mahābhārata', *ABORI*, XXXVI, 1955, pp. 190-203) that the Purāṇa Pañchalakṣhaṇas and the *Mbh.* both owe their origin to the Aśvamedha sacrifice, and especially to its Pariplāva Akhyānas.

<sup>2</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 5.



A.D. . . . . the new topics added relate mainly to various kinds of gifts, initiation, sacrifices to the planets and their pacification, Homa, consecration (pratishtā) of images etc., Saṁdhyā, glorification of Brāhmins and their worship, glorification of holy places, Tithis, Utsarga, Vrata and Pūjā. These topics are found neither in the works of Manu Yāj. nor in the Purāṇas, or portions thereof, which were written earlier than about the beginning of the sixth century A.D.”<sup>1</sup>

The earliest and latest probable dates for such additions of the Smṛti materials to some of the important Purāṇas according to Hazra’s theory are as follows:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa | 3rd to 5th cent. A.D. (some portions may be much later).                                      |
| 2. Brahmāṇḍa and     |   |
| 3. Vāyu Purāṇas      | 3rd to 5th cent. A.D.   |
| 4. Viṣṇu Purāṇa      | 3rd to 4th cent. A.D.   |
| 5. Bhāgavata Purāṇa  | 6th cent. A.D.  |
| 6. Matsya Purāṇa     | 6th to 7th cent. A.D. (some portions may be as late as A.D. 1000 or even later). <sup>2</sup> |

A few chapters dealing with topics such as holy places, Varṇāśramadharmā, yugadharmā, strī-dharmā, glorification of the Brāhmaṇas, worship of Śālagrama, Tulasī, planets and Devī, and merit of digging tanks, dedicating trees, gardens and reservoirs, etc., were interpolated in the *Vāyu*, *Matsya*, *Padma*, *Brahma*, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Skanda* and *Garuda Purāṇas* in the post-1000 A.D. period.

P.V. Kane has divided the chronology of the composition of the Purāṇas into five stages. In the first stage we find references to the Purāṇa in the *Atharvaveda*, the *Śatapatha* and the ancient Upanishads. About the contents of this Purāṇa we know nothing. In the second stage there definitely existed at least three Purāṇas. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* refers to *Purāṇānī* while the *Āpastamba Dharma sūtra* quotes four verses from a Purāṇa and expressly

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188-89.

<sup>2</sup>*CA*, p. 298.

mentions the *Bhavishyat Purāṇa*. It shows that in the 5th-4th century B.C. there existed at least three Purāṇas including a *Bhavishyat* and that they contained sarga, pratisarga and some Smṛti material. In the third stage, belonging to the period before the second-third centuries A.D., several Purāṇas quoted in the *Mbh.* and Smṛti texts were composed. The *Matsya* was composed or more probably revised about the close of the third century A.D. while the *Vayu*, and *Brahmāṇḍa* were revised between 320—325 A.D. since they refer to the Guptas but do not refer to any Gupta king. Most of the Mahāpurāṇas were composed from 5th-6th century A.D. to the 9th century A.D., which is the fourth stage of the evolution of the Purāṇas. The Upapurāṇas were composed from about 7th-8th century to the 13th century or even later which was the last stage of the evolution of the Purāṇa literature.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas as a Source of Religious History*

From the religious point of view the present Purāṇas are more or less sectarian, carrying on propaganda in favour of a particular deity or a place sacred to that deity. Their main religious material may briefly be indicated thus:<sup>2</sup>

The *Brahma P.* is devoted to the glorification of sacred places, and a large section of it deals with the Kṛṣṇa legends. At the end of it there are a few chapters dealing with the *śrādhās*, the duties of the castes, āśramas, and the rewards of Viṣṇu bhakti. The *Padma P.* in its last book gives an account of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Some of the books of its longer version contain chapters on the glory of the cults of Gaṇeśa and Śiva. The *Viṣṇu P.*, as is obvious from its name, describes Viṣṇu as the highest being and the sole creator and preserver of the world. Among the narratives and myths contained in it mention may be made of the legends of *samudra manthana* (churning of the ocean) and of Dhruva and Prahlāda. Its fifth book describes the glory of divine Kṛṣṇa and his marvellous adventures. The *Vāyu P.* contains legends in glorification of Śiva. Hence its second name *Śiva P.* The *Nārada P.*, on the other hand, propagates the Viṣṇu cult and is a purely sectarian text.

<sup>1</sup>HD, V, ii, pp. 853-5.

<sup>2</sup>CA, p. 292 ff. For P.V. Kane's notes on individual Purāṇas see his HD, V, pp. 292-4; Pt. II, p. 887 ff.; cf. also Dandekar, CHI, II, p. 253 ff.

The *Bhāgavata P.* is a very late work. Doubts have been expressed as regards its genuineness and some scholars have ascribed it to the grammarian Vopadeva. It contains twelve books of which the tenth, devoted to the life of Kṛṣṇa, is highly popular. Kapila, the founder of the Sāṃkhya system, and the Buddha appear as incarnations of Viṣṇu in it.

The *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* is one of the oldest Purāṇas. In some of its sections instead of Viṣṇu and Śiva Vedic deities like Indra, Agni, and Sūrya receive attention. Its section called *Durgā Saptasati* or *Devī Māhātmya* is highly popular and extremely important for the study of the Śākta cult.

The *Agni P.* is a Śaivite work dealing with the cults of Liṅga, Durgā and Gaṇeśa. It is encyclopaedic in character. The *Bhavishya P.* describes the Brāhmaṇical rites, duties of castes, and so on. The solar priests Bhojakas and Magas are mentioned in it in connection with the worship of Sūrya. The *Liṅga* and the *Varāha Purāṇas* were probably composed quite late. The former was apparently influenced by Tāntrikism. It teaches the worship of Śiva, especially in the liṅga form. The latter is intended to be a manual for Viṣṇu worshippers, though it contains legends of Śiva, Durgā and Gaṇeśa also.

The ancient *Skanda P.* is probably entirely lost to us. What remains of it is only the name to which extensive works, said to be Saṃhitās or Khaṇḍas of the original Purāṇa, and numerous Māhātmyas claim allegiance. The *Vāmana P.* can also hardly be accepted as the original work bearing that name. A considerable portion of it is devoted to liṅga worship. There are also many legends in it about Śiva Umā, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. In the *Kūrma P.* Viṣṇu, in the form of a tortoise (*kūrma*), narrates the Purāṇa to King Indradyumna.

The *Matsya P.* is written in the form of a *saṃvāda* between the fish (*matsya*) and Manu whom the former saves at the time of the great flood. It describes various festivals, rites and glory of sacred places. In the *Garuḍa P.* emphasis is laid on the various forms of Viṣṇu worship. Like the *Agni P.*, this text is also encyclopaedic in form. The *Brahmāṇḍa P.* contains only glorification of places and hymns of praise. The *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* is considered to be a part of this Purāṇa. It teaches Vedāntic monism and devotion to Rāma as paths to salvation.



Beside these Purāṇas there are Upapurāṇas whose number is also stated to be eighteen (though their actual number is much larger, probably more than a hundred).<sup>1</sup> They are more or less the product of local cults and different religious sects. Among the works belonging to this class may be mentioned the *Vishṇudharmottara*, a Vaishṇava work from Kashmir. The *Brhaddharma Purāṇa* mentions even Vālmīki and Vyāsa, besides Kapila and the Buddha, as incarnations of Vishṇu. The *Kalki P.* relates the deeds of Vishṇu at the close of the Kali age. Some of these Upapurāṇas are quite late, but not all of them.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of the Purāṇas for study of the development of Hinduism can never be overrated. In fact "they afford us far greater insight into all aspects and phases of Hinduism—its mythology, its idol-worship, its theism and pantheism, its love of God, its philosophy and its superstitions, its festivals and ceremonies, and its ethics, than any other works". According to Mehendale<sup>3</sup> they "may be regarded as a deliberate attempt to bring the theistic religions like Vaishṇavism and Śaivism within the pale of orthodoxy by combining the new doctrines with a respect for Vedic rituals, customs, and beliefs, specially the orthodox ideas of caste and order (Varṇāśrama). These had fallen into disuse or comparative neglect, partly on account of the rise of the new sectarian religions, which were all more or less anti-Vedic and anti-Brahmanical in their inception, and partly on account of the large influx of foreign elements in the Hindu population in the wake of the successive invasions of the Greeks, Pārthians, Śakas, and Kushāṇas. Necessity was therefore felt of a new class of popular literature which would reconcile the moderate heterodox cults like Vaishṇavism and Śaivism to the old social customs and rituals as far as practicable. The Purāṇas<sup>4</sup> were thus revised and modified

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed study of the Upapurāṇas vide Hazra, R.C., in *CHI*, II, pp. 271. See also his *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, I, pp. 1-400. Their lists preserved in different texts differ from each other. The *Devī Bhāgavata* claims to be a Mahāpurāṇa and relegates the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* of the Vaishṇavas to the status of an Upapurāṇa. Some Purāṇas do not recognise *Vāyu P.* as a Mahāpurāṇa. The *Kūrma P.* says that the Upapurāṇas are the summaries of the Mahāpurāṇas while the *Saura P.*, itself an Upapurāṇa, calls them *Khilas* or supplements.

<sup>2</sup>*CHI*, II, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>*CA*, p. 297 f.

<sup>4</sup>That is, the ancient Purāṇas.



in order to serve as the religious texts of that large section of the people who, though devoted worshippers of Śiva and Viṣṇu, were at the same time too much attached to Vedas and Smṛtis or Dharmaśāstras, particularly the Varṇāśrama, to abandon them altogether for the sake of the new creed. Thus a new class of sectarians arose who may be called Smārta-Śaivas or Smārta Vaishṇavas," the needs of whom were fulfilled by these texts.

#### *Later (Paurāṇika-Tāntrika) Upanishads*

The later or post-Vedic Upanishads constitute an important source for the study of epic-Paurāṇika religion.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier period only ten Upanishads (*Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Praśna*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chhāndogya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*) were recognised as important and were called Daśopaniṣad. A little later, three or four were added to the list of the important ones, namely, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Kaushītaki*, *Maitrāyaṇī* and the *Mahānārāyaṇa*, specially because they were quoted in the commentaries of and and were commented upon by the great āchāryas.<sup>2</sup> The tradition of the composition of the Upanishads continued in later ages. For, when the form and style of 'Upanishad' established its reputation, it was natural for writers to adopt this name for their writings even if most of them did not deserve it. Thus we have references to 108, and 144 and 183, and 365, and 1008 Upanishads. In the *Muktikopaniṣad* Hanumāna is told by Rāma that if a person is desirous of bodily absorption in Brahman, he should study all the 108 Upanishads enumerated in this Upanishad. They are the following:

*Īśā(vāsyā)*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha(vallī)*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chhāndogya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Brahma*, *Kaivalya*, *Jābāla*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Haṁsa*, *Ātuṇi*, *Garbha*, *Nārāyaṇa*, (*Parama*) *haṁsa*, (*Amṛta*) *bindu*, (*Amṛta*) *nāda*, (*Atharva*) *śīras*, (*Atharva*) *śikhā*, *Maitrāyaṇī*, *Kaushītaki*, *Bṛhajjābāla*, (*Nṛsiṃha*) *tāpanī*, *Kālāgnirudra*, *Maitreyī*, *Subāla*, *Kshurī(kā)*, *Mantrikā*, *Sarvnsāra*, *Nirālamba*, (*Śuka*) *rahasya*, *Vajrasūchikā*, *Tejo(bindu)*, *Nāda(bindu)*, *Dhyāna* (*bindu*), (*Brahma*) *vidyā*, *Yogatattva*, *Ātma(pra)bodha*, (*Nārada*) *parivarājuka*, *Trīśikhī(brāhmaṇa)*, *Sītā*, (*Yoga*) *chūḍā(maṇi)*, *Nirvāṇa*, *Maṇḍala* (*brāhmaṇa*), *Dakṣiṇā(mūrti)*, *Śarabha*, *Skanda*, *Mahānārāyaṇa* (*Tripādavibhūtimahānārāyaṇa*), *Advaya(tāraka)*, (*Rāma*)

<sup>1</sup>As these works are generally neglected in the works on the epic-Paurāṇika religion, we are treating them in relatively greater detail.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *RHAI*, I, p. 106 ff.

rahasya, Rāmatāpanī, Vāsudeva, Mudgala, Śāṇḍilya, Paiṅgala, Bhikshu, Mahat, Śārīraka, (Yoga)śikhā, Turīyātīta, Sannyāsa, (Paramahansa) Parivrājaka, Akshamālikā, Avyakta (Vajra?), Ekākshara, (Anna)pūrṇā, Sūrya, Akshi, Adhyātma, Kuṇḍikā, Sāvitrī, Ātma, Pāśupata, Parabrahma, Avadhūta, Tripurātapanā, Devī, Tripurā, Kaṭha(rudra), Bhāvanā, Hṛdaya (Rudra hṛdaya) Jābālodarśana, (Yoga)kuṇḍali(nī), Bhasma(jābāla), Rudrāksha(jābāla), Gaṇa(pati), Darśana, Tārasāra, Mahāvākya, Pañchabrahma, (Prāṇ) āgñihotra, Gopālatapana, Kṛshṇa, Yājñavalkya, Varāha, Śātyāyanī, Hayagrīva, Dattātreya, Garuḍa, Kali (santarāṇa), Jābālī, Saubhāgya (Saubhāgyalakshmi) (Sarasvatī)rahasya, (Bahv)ṛcha, and Muktikā.<sup>1</sup> Among the 108 Upanishads, which are enumerated by Gajendra-gadkar (after omitting the names of ancient Upanishads) the following are included: Advaita, Ātmapūjā, Chakra, Guhyakālī, Kātyāyana, Mahāvākya-vivaraṇa, Maitreya, Nārāyaṇa (No. 2), Nīlarūdra, Piṇḍa, Śiva, Śrīvidyāmnāya, Sumukhi, Svasamvedya, and Yogarāja. The Gopālatapana, Rāmatāpanī and Nṛsimhatāpanī are usually counted as two each—pūrva and uttara (for example Gopālapūrvatapana and Gopālottaratapana).<sup>2</sup>

The order in which these Upanishads are mentioned above is neither chronological nor logical. There is no authentic historical evidence to prove the first, while it is *prima facie* evident that they do not represent a logical development.<sup>3</sup> Actually, we have no sufficient data to determine the chronological stratification of the post-Vedic Upanishads. Their period is obviously very vast, beginning from the time when the last of the old Upanishads was written and lasting till the advent of the British rule, for there is one Upanishad, called *Akabaropanishad* (or *Allopanishad*) and another, known as *Christopanishad*, obviously written respectively in the Mughal and post-Mughal periods. But one can easily make out the differences between the Upanishads of the Paurāṇika-Tāntrika age and the comparatively modern ones. The philosophy of the many of the New Upanishads is closely allied both in form and presentation with that of many of the old, so as to deservedly obtain the name of Upanishad, but a number of them are clearly later than the emergence of the six systems of philosophy. Occasion-

<sup>1</sup>CHI, I, p. 346; *Kalyāṇa*, Upanishad aṅka, Gita Press, p. 624 f.

<sup>2</sup>Gajendragadkar, K.V., *Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy*, Bombay, 1959, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.



ally an Upanishad shows influence of a particular school of thought—the *Svasamivedya Upa.*, for example, is purely a Mahāyānist text. It is also obvious that the various groups of the New Upanishads, such as the Vedāntic, the Yogic, the Śaivite, the Vaishnavite, etc., were written respectively in periods when these different branches of speculation prevailed.

#### *Contents of the Paurāṇika-Tāntrika Upanishads*

According to Gajendragadkar the transitation from the Upanishadic to the Neo-Upanishadic period may fitly be compared with the transition from the Platonic to the Neo-Platonic thought in Europe. Neo-Upanishadism like Neo-Platonism takes a predominant interest in practical ethics and mysticism.<sup>1</sup> Usually they continue the argument of the old Upanishads. Brahman as the highest Reality forms the subject-matter of almost all the New Upanishads also. Purusha and Prakṛti and other categories of the Sāṃkhyas appear prominently in many of them. We are told in the *Śārīrakopanishad* that Pradhāna or Prakṛti consists of twenty-four elements, that the individual soul is *Kshetrajña*, while Purusha is greater than these and beyond these. In the *Nirālambopanishad* Purusha is defined as a sort of power of Brahman. The *Mantrikopanishad* describes Prakṛti or creative power as assuming the form of a cow or she-goat and as being the cause of all change in the world. The relation of the individual self with the Supreme Self discussed by the New Upanishads is usually the same as that found in the Old Upanishad. Thus in the *Gopālottaratapana Upa.*, we are told that the two birds (individual self and the Supreme Self, cling to the same tree: one of them eats the sweet fruit, while the other looks on without eating it. In the *Śukarahasya* and the *Mahāvākyavivarāṇa Upanishads* the *mahāvākyas* of the Old Upanishads regarding the relation of Brahman and Ātman are discussed.

But the main problem before the New Upanishads is not how to begin philosophising, but how to give a practical turn to the early philosophical thought. Being the fusion of the fundamental thoughts of the Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Bhakti systems, they are eclectic in their philosophisings. But sometimes they take a

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.

few steps in advance over the thoughts of early Upanishads while some of their ideas are entirely new and original. In ethics greater stress is laid on practical ideals. Ascetic ideals in their modified form are recommended for the common people and the importance of mysticism, the science of self-realisation, is emphasized. More attention is paid to the problems of occult psychology. The rise of interest in the physiological sciences is much more in evidence, as we see from the *Garbhopenishad*, which is an original contribution to the theory of embryology. Finally, the simplification and popular presentation of the various philosophical problems as seen in the *Sarvasāropanishad* and the *Maitreyyupanishad* as well as the concretisation of abstract concepts for practical purposes and the exaltation of devotion to God in various forms as preached in the different Bhakti schools clearly show that at the time of the New Upanishads philosophy had become popular and an interesting subject of discussion.<sup>1</sup>

The gods of the New Upanishads may be classified into four main divisions—the Śaivite gods, the Vaishṇavite, gods, the goddesses and the minor gods. The Paurāṇika tenor of all these gods and goddesses is quite clear. The *Śarabhopenishad* praises Śiva as Supreme God. Yājñavalkya, the philosopher of the *Jābālopanishad* recommends the worship of Rudra. In the *Jābālyupanishad* Śiva is described as Paśupati, in the *Hamsopenishad* as Sadāśiva and in the *Bhasmajābāla Upa.* as Mahādeva. The *Tripādvibhūtimahānārāyaṇa Upa.* gives details about Viṣṇu. In the *Gopālottaratāpana Upa.* we have an enumeration of four other forms of Viṣṇu, namely, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. Both the *Nṛsimhatāpini Upanishads* are devoted to the description of Nṛsimha. Nārāyaṇa is described in the *Nārāyaṇa Upa.* as also in the *Ātmaprabodhopanishad*. Kṛṣṇa is described in both the *Gopālatāpana Upanishads* and the *Kṛṣṇopenishad* contains a metaphorical description of the god. We are told that Kṛṣṇa is verily the eternal. Brahman, kindness being his mother Rohiṇī, earth Satyabhāmā, and the thousands of Upanishads and Vedic verses, his wives. Brahmā is said to be the creator of the world, Viṣṇu the protector and Rudra the destroyer. Viṣṇu and Rudra are eulogised in many of these Upanishads, but Brahmā remains only the cosmic creative power never personified

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.



prominently. In the *Sūryopanishad* and the *Gāṇapatyupanishad* respectively Sūrya and Gaṇapati are eulogised. The description of different goddesses shows influence of Śāktism, which is also responsible for the introduction of Tāntrikism into these texts. In the *Baḥvrchopanishad* a number of goddesses are mentioned, but it makes the Mahātripurasundarī the object of special praise. Sarasvatī is described in the *Sarasvatīrahasyopanishad*. Durgā is described in the *Devī Upa.* as living in the lotus within the heart, and as refulgent like the morning sun.

In the New Upanishads many attempts have been made for the reconciliation of the claims of the different Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava gods. According to Gajendragadkar this reconciliation seems to have been effected in four different ways. Firstly, they have adopted the old henotheistic approach in order to remind the devotee that any and every god may be regarded as the supreme one. Though the various sectarian Upanishads begin with a praise of the deity after whom they are named, they end with an identification of their deity with all the heavenly gods, with the Highest God, with the Self, and, in fact, with Brahman. The second way of reconciliation is a deliberate identification of Śiva and Viṣṇu. In the *Skandopanishad* we are told that Śiva constitutes the heart of Viṣṇu while Viṣṇu constitutes the heart of Śiva. The third method of reconciliation seems to be by what might be called a higher pantheism. Thus in the *Maitreyīyupanishad*, we are told that the body is to be regarded as a temple in which the Highest God is to be worshipped with the conviction that the Individual Self is the same as the Universal Self. Finally, the insistence on the efficacy of the name of God, as in the *Kalīsantaraṇopanishad*, irrespective of any ritualistic or devotional ceremonialism is offered as an excellent means for the rejection of all the sectarian modes of worship in the interests of a higher philosophy of devotion.<sup>1</sup>

The cosmological views of the new Upanishads may generally be said to be of five kinds. The *Nṛsimhapūrvatāpanī Upa* offers a mythical or ritualistic account of the creation of the world inasmuch as it tells us that the world came into being from the Anuṣṭubh or Sāman. Creation from water and either is advocated respectively in the *Brhajjābālōpanishad* and the *Nṛsimhapūrvatāpanī Upa*. Like the Purāṇas the New Upanishads also credit the various gods

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

with creative power. In fact, they are described as having created, supported, destroyed or re-created the world, as they pleased. The cosmology of the *Avyaktopanishad*, however, is a mythico-philosophical one, inasmuch as it adopts both kinds of categories in its explanation of the creation of the world while the cosmological thought of the *Tripādvibhūtimahānārāyaṇa Upa.* is very complex in nature—being a fusion of Theology, Advaita Vedānta and Sāṃkhya. Lastly, the illusionistic theory of creation explains the origin of the world from Māyā. In the *Sarasvatīrahasya Upa.*, for example, we are told that the world was created out of Māyā which is identified with the goddess Sarasvatī. In the *Rāmatāpanī Upa.* and in the *Śītupanishad*, Sītā is identified with Prakṛti or creative power of god Rāma.

The New Upanishads used a large number of Paurāṇika-Tāntrika symbols. Vibhūti or the holy ashes, also called Bhasita Bhasma Kshara, etc., is extolled in the *Brhajjābālā* and *Bhasmajābālā Upanishads* as the primary existence and the internal self of all beings. The symbols Rudrāksha and Akshamālā are extolled respectively in the *Rudrākshajābālopanishad* and the *Akshamālikopanishad*. The importance of the Tripuṇḍra is hinted at in the *Brhajjābālā* and *Bhasmajābālā Upanishads* and discussed in detail in the *Kālāgnirudropanishad*. Yajñopavīta and Śikhā are described as prominent insignia of Brāhmaṇahood in several Upanishads. Anuṣṭubh, praised even in the old Upanishads, is extolled in the *Nṛsimhapūrvatāpinī* and the *Nṛsimhottaratāpinī Upanishads* as the cause of all that exists. Anuṣṭubh is also identified with the symbol *Om* which is made to stand for the identify of the microcosm and the macrocosm, thus representing the oneness of the Self and Brahman (*Nādabindūpanishad*).

The symbolism of the New Upanishads contains copious references to Tāntrika terminology also. Some of the New Upanishads, for example, the *Śrīvidyāmnāyopanishad* and *Tripuratāpany-upanishad*, are entirely Tāntrika in nature. The Tāntrika symbols such as Bindu, Nāda, Rajas, Bīja, Sthāna, Śakti, Mantra, Yantra, Chakra and Tāraka occur in them frequently. In the *Yogakuṇḍalinī Upanishad* the Bindu is described as the cause of creation and sustenance of the world. Nāda, we are told in the *Dhyānabindūpanishad*, is subtler than Bindu. The terms Bīja, Sthāna, and Śakti are used in the *Nṛsimhapūrvatāpinī Upa.* in the description of its great mantra. A Mantra is defined in the *Rāmapūrvatāpinī Upa.*

as god's name which, when mediated upon, protects the devotee. Yantra is a geometrically represented Mantra. Gods are pleased if they are worshipped by means of Yantras. Chakra is closely related to Yantra; in fact, it is only a kind of Yantra. This is also thought to be useful in pleasing the gods. Various Chakras are found described in different Upanishads, e.g. the Śrīchakra in the *Tripura-tāpini Upanishad*.

Here we may briefly touch some other aspects of the neo-Upanishadic thought. The New Upanishads delineate the Sannyāsa āśrama in detail. They describe the qualifications of a Sannyāsin, kinds of Sannyāsa, the Orders of Sannyāsins, etc. They repeatedly reiterate the idea that mind is the cause of men's bondage or freedom and that he is bound when his mind is attached to desires and that freedom comes with desirelessness which can be obtained by the conquest of mind through yoga.

Yoga is described in detail in many of these texts. The *Yoga-chūḍāmaṇi Upa.* tells us that man has three bodies, namely the gross or material body, the subtle or Liṅgaśarīra and the causal body. Several of these texts discuss Nāḍīs, the Chakras or plexuses, and the Kuṇḍalinī. In the *Darśanopanishad* we are told that the body is 96 *aṅgulas* in length, and in the middle of it is a triangular plexus, the abode of the all-purifying light. In the *Yogaśikhopaniṣad* yoga is described as being four-fold : Haṭhayoga, Mantra-yoga, Layayoga and Rājayoga. As pointed out by Gajendra-gadkar, the Mantra and Laya Yogas may be included in Rājayoga and one may say that there are only two main divisions of Yoga, namely. Haṭhayoga and Rājayoga. Both these aim at the attainment of Reality through mind-control, but they recommend different methods for its attainment. The aim of Rājayoga was practical communion with God. Haṭhayoga starts with the purification and control of the brain and the nervous system by such processes as āsanās, bandhas and mudrās, and holds out before the initiate the attainment of such occult powers as clairvoyance and clairaudience. Three very monstrous processes prescribed by Haṭhayoga are called Vajroli, Amaroli and Sahajoli. Vajroli is the process in which a pot-full of milk is drawn in by the generative organ by means of a tube and is later on thrown out. In the process of Amaroli one is required to drink and snuff one's own urine every



day. These processes of Haṭhayoga are regarded as being useful in rousing the Kuṇḍalinī.

### *Smṛtis, Bhāṣhyas and Nibandhas*

Although the Vedas are regarded as the ultimate source of dharma, in practice it is the *Smṛtis*, *Smṛti* digests (*nibandhas*), commentaries (*bhāṣhyas*) and the *Smṛti* material in the Purāṇas to which the Paurāṇika and Smārta Hindus all over India turn for the exposition of religious duties and usages.<sup>1</sup> The *Smṛtis* are generally regarded as the expanded and metrical versions of the Dharma-sūtras. Some scholars even believe that each *Smṛti* was based upon a corresponding Dharmasūtra.<sup>2</sup> The *Smṛtis* have, however, incorporated the contemporary local customs and usages of the *śiṣṭas* (learned and cultured) and much of the *Mahābhārata* material. In this way they have tried to keep abreast of changing times and reflect their spirit. The *Smṛti* works extend over a period of eight hundred years or even more. As in the case of Dharma-sūtras, we have a large number of *Smṛtis* which are ascribed to old ṛshis but are actually of comparatively late origin.<sup>3</sup> It is indeed extremely difficult to make a chronological stratification of the *Smṛti* materials, because each of these texts was not only elaborated with the passage of time, but the material incorporated at one time reflects views which had become traditional by that time, and also current usages and practices along with suggestions for the future.<sup>4</sup>

The *Mānava Dharmasāstra* or *Manusmṛti* is the oldest, the best-known and the most respected work of this class. It was probably based upon a *Mānava Dharmasūtra*, which is now lost, but quota-

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed study of the Dharmasāstra literature, see Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, I.

<sup>2</sup>Bühler, Eng. trans. of *Manusmṛti*, Intro. (SBE, XXV); for a study of the relations of the Dharmasūtras and *Smṛtis* and also their importance for the study of dharma, vide Ramaswami Sastri, V.A., 'The Dharma-sūtras and the Dharma-sāstras', *CHI*, II, pp. 301-311. For the study of dharma as enunciated in the *Smṛtis*, vide Venkatarama Sastri, T.R., 'The *Smṛtis*', *Ibid.*, pp. 312-34; also Raghvan, V., 'The *Manu Samhitā*', *ibid.*, pp. 335-63 and Ranajit Singh, *Dharma ki Hindu Avadhāraṇā*, Allahabad, 1977, p. 22 ff.

<sup>3</sup>*AIU*, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup>Singh, S., *Evolution of the Smṛti Law*, Varanasi, 1972.



tions from which have been traced in the *Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra*.<sup>1</sup> According to its own claim it was composed by the Divine Creator who taught it to Bhṛgu and other ṛshis. This theory of divine origin undoubtedly gave it a sacrosanct character. According to modern scholars, however, it was composed between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200 and was possibly revised several times. The Smṛti itself admits more than one redaction of the text, and the *Nārada-smṛti* says that the original *Manusmṛti* was successively abridged by Nārada, Mārkaṇḍeya and Sumati.<sup>2</sup>

There are many other Smṛti texts of a more or less similar nature of which those of Viṣṇu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada, Bṛhaspati and Kātyāyana are regarded as more important than others. These were written between the first and the seventh centuries A.D. After them were composed the Smṛtis of Devala and Vyāsa.

By the seventh century A.D. the age of the composition of the original Dharmaśāstra literature was over and commentators and writers of digests (*nibandhas*) took the field. The first of the important commentators was Asahāya (seventh cent. A.D.). He was followed by Viśvarūpa who wrote his *Balakṛīḍā* on the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* before Vijñāneśvara who thrice refers to it in his *Mitāksharā*. The most celebrated early bhāshyakāra is of course Medhātithi (9th century) who is regarded as the most authoritative commentator of the *Manusmṛti*. Among other writers on Dharmaśāstra belonging to the Pratihāra period (750-1000 A.D.) may be mentioned Bhāruchi, Śrīkara, and Yogloka who are known only from quotations. "Vijñāneśvara's *Mitāksharā* represents the essence of Dharmaśāstra speculation that preceded it, and became the fountain-head from which flowed fresh streams of exegesis".<sup>3</sup> The *Mitāksharā* is not a mere bhāshya on the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, but is in the nature of a *nibandha* of the Smṛti materials. Among other famous Bengal authors are included Aniruddha, Ballālasena and Halāyudha. Kullūkabhaṭṭa, the author of the *Manvārthamuktāvalī*, the most famous of the commentaries on the *Manusmṛti*, also belonged to Bengal.

As compared to commentaries on particular Smṛtis, the digests contained a synthesis of all the dicta of the ancient Smṛti-

<sup>1</sup> *AIU*, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Struggle for Empire*, p. 333.

kāras on the various topics of Dharma.<sup>1</sup> The two compilations *Chaturvīṃśatimata* and *Shaṭtrīṃśanmata* also belong to this age. The first contains a summary of the teachings of 24 sages. The second is known only from quotations. It is interesting to note that both are decidedly anti-Buddhist, and the latter even prescribes a bath for touching the Buddhists, Pāśupatas, Jainas, atheists, and followers of Kapila.<sup>2</sup>

The post-Pratihāra period was the golden age of the digest writing. Jīmūtavāhana was the greatest of the early Bengal writers of this period. Only three of his works are known, viz. *Kālaviveka*, *Vyavahāramāṭṛkā*, and *Dāyabhāga*. Śrīdhara's *Smṛtyarthasāra* deals with the usual Dharmaśāstra topics. The *Smṛtichandrikā* of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa is also a well-known and extensive digest on the Dharmaśāstra. Hemādri, an officer of the Yādava king of Devagiri, wrote his *Chaturvargachintāmaṇi* which is an encyclopaedia of ancient religious rites and observations.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 330 ff. For a detailed study of the various *nibandha* schools vide Bhattacharya, D.C., 'The Nibandhas', *CHI*, II, p. 364-80.

<sup>2</sup>*The Age of the Imperial Kanauj*, p. 202.

<sup>3</sup>*The Struggle for Empire*, p. 333 ff.

## Chapter 2

# Philosophical Background of Smarta and epic-Pauranika Religion

### *Classification of Schools and General Development*

According to a traditional classification, the schools of Indian philosophy (which provide philosophical bases to Indian religious sects) are divided into two broad groups viz. orthodox (*āstika*) and heterodox (*nāstika*). To the first group belong the six chief philosophical systems (popularly known as *saḍ-darśana*), namely, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. These are regarded as orthodox (*āstika*), not because they believe in God, but because they accept the authority of the Vedas. Under the heterodox systems are included the Chārvākas, the Buddhists and the Jainas. They are called heterodox (*nāstika*) because they do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. According to T.R. V. Murti this classification errs by being at once too narrow (as it does not include the non-Advaitic and Śaiva schools etc.) and too wide (if the intention is to include basic schools only, for there are only three basic systems—the Sāṃkhya, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Advaita Vedānta). Murti himself suggests that the Indian philosophy flows from two vital streams—Ātmavāda of the Upanishads and the Anātmavāda of the Buddha. According to him Buddhism and Jainism were not deviations but rather radical departures from the Ātmavāda of the Upanishads.<sup>1</sup> We have discussed this view elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

All the ancient Indian philosophical systems grew through several stages. The philosophical views formulated by a great man

<sup>1</sup>Murti, T.R.V., 'Rise of the Philosophical Schools', *CHI*, III, pp. 27-40.

<sup>2</sup>Goyal, S.R., *A Religious History of Ancient India*, I, p. 236 ff.; 257 ff.



in the dim past were gradually defined and systematized by a succession of followers in the shape of philosophical *Sūtras* or *Kārikās*. Then each system, as it grew, elaborated its own doctrines to meet criticisms of its opponents and offer solutions of new problems. This was done by the composition of texts which professed to be merely commentaries on the preceding *Sūtra* works. The later Indian philosophers thus remained content with writing merely commentaries or commentaries on commentaries (*bhāshya*, *tīka*, etc.). Even Śaṅkarāchārya, the greatest Indian philosopher, wrote merely commentaries on the *Brahmasūtra*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and the Upanishads.<sup>1</sup>

### *Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika*

Although even in the earliest stages of their history the schools of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika held independent positions both in epistemology and metaphysics, yet it was recognised from the very beginning that their differences are of minor importance.<sup>2</sup> The Nyāya philosophy, which was essentially a school of logic, was traditionally founded by the great sage Gautama (also known as Gotama and Akshapāda), the author of the *Nyāyasūtra*, though Jayanta asserts that there was logic before Gautama, even as Mīmāṃsā was before Jaimini and grammar before Pāṇini and the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* refers to Vākovākya, which Śaṅkara interprets as Tarkaśāstra. The subsequent works of the Nyāya system, such as Vātsayāyana's *Nyāyabhāshya*, Uddyotakara's *Nyāyavārttika*, Vāchaspati's *Nyāyavārttikatātparyatīkā*, Udayana's *Nyāyavārttikatātparyapariśuddhi* and *Kusumāñjali*, Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjarī*, etc., explain and develop the ideas contained in the *Nyāyasūtra* and also defend them against the criticism of opponents.

The Nyāya system is a realistic philosophy based mainly on logical grounds. It accepts four separate sources of true knowledge, namely perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anumāna*), comparison (*upamāna*) and testimony (*śabda*). All other sources of knowledge have been reduced by the Naiyāyikas to these four.

The objects of knowledge, according to the Nyāya school, are the self, the body, the senses and their objects, cognition (*buddhi*),

<sup>1</sup>Murti, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Mookenjee, Śatkari, 'Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika', *CHI*, III, pp. 91-124.



mind (*manas*), activity (*pravṛtti*), mental defects (*dosha*), rebirth (*pretyabhāba*), the feelings of pleasure and pain (*phala*), suffering (*dukkha*), and freedom from suffering (*apavarga*).

The Nyāya, like many other systems of Indian philosophy, believes that freedom of the self from the bondage to the body, the sense and their objects is the *summum bonum* of life. Liberation (*apavarga*) means the absolute cessation of all pain and suffering brought about by the right knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*). The view that it is a state of happiness is wrong, for there is no pleasure without pain, just as there is no light without shade. *Apavarga* therefore is only release from pain, and not happiness. Under the loving care and wise guidance of the Divine Being whose existence is sought to be proved by a number of arguments all souls can attain right knowledge about themselves and the world, and thereby *mukti* (final release) from all suffering.

According to Garbe, who is supported by Radhakrishnan, the Vaiśeshika system is of much greater antiquity than the Nyāya.<sup>1</sup> It takes its name from *viśeṣa* or particularity. It was founded by Kaṇāda alias Ulūka, the author of the *Vaiśeshikasūtra*. This work is divided into ten *adhyāyas*. The later works on the Vaiśeshika combine this system with the Nyāya. Of these Śivāditya's *Sapta-padārthī*, Laugākṣhī Bhāskara's *Tarkakaumudī* and Viśvanātha's *Bhāṣhāparichchheda* with its commentary *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* are important.

The Vaiśeshika system is allied to the Nyāya and believes that the liberation of the individual self is the *summum bonum* of life. It is based on a system of atomism, explaining the cosmic process in which the soul is involved. It brings all objects of knowledge, i.e. the whole world, under the seven categories of substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), action (*karman*), generality (*sāmānya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), the relation of inherence (*samavāya*), and non-existence (*abhāva*). There are nine kinds of substances, viz. earth, water, fire, air, ether (*ākāśa*), time, space, soul and mind (*manas*). A quality is that which exists in a substance and has itself no quality or activity. Particularity (*viśeṣa*) is the ground of the ultimate differences between things. With regard to God the Vaiśeshika theory is substantially the same as that of the Nyāya.

<sup>1</sup>Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, II, p. 177; Garbe, *The Philosophy of Ancient India*, p. 20.

### *Sāṃkhya and Yoga*

The first mention of the Sāṃkhya is found in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* (VI. 13) though some vague anticipations of the Sāṃkhya theory of Purusha and Prakṛti are found in the cosmology of the *RV* also. It has also been suggested that the roots of the dualism of Sāṃkhya may go back to the Indus civilization in the worship of the male principle in the form of Paśupati, and the female principle in the form of the mother goddess.<sup>1</sup> In the Upanishads the Sāṃkhya philosophy assumes clearer shape. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, the unmanifested (*avyakta*) stands at the top of an evolution series on the plane of matter, from which the great self (*mahānātmā*), intellect, mind, objects and senses spring in succession. The *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* gives a more developed account of the Sāṃkhya principles of the cosmos and the three *guṇas*, though in it the Sāṃkhya elements are subordinated to theism, its main teaching. In the *Mbh.*, the *Anugītā* explains the distinction of Purusha and Prakṛti. Generally, the Sāṃkhya views, as we meet with them in the Upanishads, the *Mbh.*, (including the *Gītā* and *Anugītā*) and *Manusmṛti* lean to theism.

According to tradition, the first work of the Sāṃkhya school was the *Sāṃkhyasūtra* of Kapila. This being very brief and terse, Kapila himself wrote an elaborate work entitled the *Sāṃkhya-pravachanasūtra*. After Kapila his disciple Āsurī, and Āsurī's disciple Pañchaśikha wrote some books. All these treatises were lost in course of time. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is the earliest available authoritative text of this school. Gauḍapāda's *Sāṃkhyakārikābhāṣya*, Vāchaspati's *Tattvakaumudī* and Vijñānabhikṣu's *Sāṃkhyapravachanabhāṣya* and *Sāṃkhyasāra* are also important works of this system.

As regards the Yoga philosophy, its roots definitely go back to the Indus civilization.<sup>2</sup> Crude ideas about the value of ecstasy and hypnotic trance are found in the *RV*. In the *AV* the idea is very common that supernatural powers can be obtained through the practice of anusterities. The Upanishads regard *tapas* and *brahmacharya* as virtues productive of great power. Those Upanishads which speak of the Sāṃkhya theories refer to the Yoga

<sup>1</sup>cf. *RAHI*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20, 33.

practices as well. The *Kaṭha*, the *Śvetāśvatara* and the *Maitrāyaṇi* refer to the practical side of religious realisation, as different from the theoretical investigation of the Sāṃkhya. Yoga, as a technical term occurs in the *Kaṭha*, the *Taittirīya* and the *Maitrāyaṇi Upanishads* though it cannot be maintained that the Yoga mentioned in them is identical with the Yoga of Patañjali. The Buddha also practised Yoga in both its senses.

The *Yogasūtra* or the *Pātañjalasūtra* is the first work of this school. Vyāsa wrote a brief but valuable commentary on the *Yogasūtra* called *Yogabhāṣya*. Vachaspati's *Tattvavaiśārādī* is a commentary on Vyāsa's commentary. Bhojarāja's *Vṛtti* and *Yogamaṇiprabhā* are simple popular works on the Yoga philosophy. Vijñānabhikṣu's *Yogavārttika* and *Yogasārasaṃgraha* are other useful texts on the Yoga philosophy.

We have given a brief outline of the philosophical tenets of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems in our discussion on their relation with Buddhism.<sup>1</sup>

### *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*

The Pūrva Mīmāṃsā or Karma Mīmāṃsā (or simply the Mīmāṃsā, as it is usually called) was the outcome of the ritualistic side of the Vedic thought just as the Vedānta or Uttara Mīmāṃsā was the development of its speculative side. The object of the Mīmāṃsā system was to help and support Vedic ritualism by (a) giving it a methodology of interpretation with which the intricate Vedic rules regarding rituals could be understood, and (b) supplying it a philosophical justification for the principles on which ritualism rested.

The foundation of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā was laid by Jaimini's *Sūtras* (about 4th cent. B.C.). According to tradition he was a disciple of Bādarāyaṇa whom he mentions in his *Sūtras* (I.1.5). Bādarāyaṇa is sometimes identified with Veda Vyāsa.<sup>2</sup> Śābarasvāmī wrote the main Bhāṣya on it (about 1st cent. B.C.). He was followed by a long line of bhāṣyakāras and independent writers chief of them being Kumārila (author of *Ślokavārttika*) and Prabhā-

<sup>1</sup>RAHI, I, pp. 259-66; cf. also Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, II, Ch. IV and V; Hiriyan, M., 'The Sāṃkhya', *CHI*, III, pp. 41-52; Bhattacharya, Haridas, 'Yoga Psychology', *ibid.*, pp. 53-90.

<sup>2</sup>Pramathanath Tarkabhushan, Mahamahopadhyaya, 'Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā', *CHI*, III, pp. 151-67.



kara (nicknamed 'Guru'), who founded the two schools of Mīmāṃsā known after their names.

As the authority of the Vedas is the basis of ritualism, the Mīmāṃsā believes that the Vedas are eternal and self-revealed (*apaurusheya*). The written or pronounced Vedas are only their temporary manifestations through particular *īshis*. For establishing the authoritativeness of the Vedas (*Vedaprāmāṇyam*) the Mīmāṃsā elaborates a theory of knowledge, which aims to show that the validity of every knowledge is self-evident.

Other main principles of the Mīmāṃsā school are: what the Vedas command one to perform is *dharma*, what they forbid is *adharma*. Soul is an immortal eternal substance, for if the soul perishes on death, the Vedic rites which are performed for the attainment of heaven (*svarga*) would become meaningless. Physical world is real on the strength of its perception. The Mīmāṃsā is, therefore, realistic. The law of *karman* is a spontaneous moral law that rules the world. On account of the potency (*apūrva*) generated in the soul by rites performed here, one can enjoy their fruits in heaven. The deities occupy a secondary place in this system—nay it even denies their existence as something separate from the mantra.<sup>1</sup> On the question of the existence of omniscient, omnipotent, all-merciful God, Jaimini, Śābarasvāmī and Kumārila are silent.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Uttara Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta*

The term 'Vedānta' literally means 'the end of the Vedas', that is the Upanishads and the doctrines set forth in them. Afterwards its denotation widened to include all thoughts developed out of the Upanishads. In this capacity the Upanishads are regarded as the first of the three *Prasthānas* of the Vedānta. They represented the secret meanings (*rahasya*) of the Veda, but the problems discussed and solutions offered in them present differences in spite of a unity in general outlook. Therefore, in course of time need was felt for systematizing the different teachings so as to bring out the harmony underlying them. The *Gl̥tā* and Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma sūtra* (also known as *Vedānta sūtra*, *Śārīrakasūtra*, *Śārīraka mīmāṃsā* or *Uttara mīmāṃsāsūtra*), respectively the *Smṛti Prasthāna*

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 167.



and the Nyāya Prasthāna of Vedānta, fulfilled this need.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Gītā as a Vedānta Text*

The *Gītā* is the Smṛti Prasthāna of the Vedānta. As we have suggested in Ch. I, both the *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa were composed in the fifth century B.C. though it is just possible that the *Gītā* is slightly earlier than the *Brahmasūtras* (*supra*). There can hardly be any doubt that the *Gītā* shows a full knowledge of the Vedānta of the Upanishads. It tells us that Ātman is the true reality. Birth, disease, death, etc. are merely accidents in the external life of the Ātman by which it is not touched and which deserve to be ignored as having no reality (II. 12 ff.). The Ātman is unborn and eternal and does not die with death or suffer with the suffering body. The Ātman is incapable of doing any action; actions are falsely ascribed to it (III. 27-29). It is omnipresent and immanent in everything (VI. 30, VII. 7; IX 4-6), centre of all beings, organic as also non-organic. It can be realized through knowledge. There are Yogic methods of self realization. Recognition is also made of the Upanishadic doctrines of Devayāna and Pitryāna (VIII. 13-17). Thus there is quite a good representation of the Upanishadic teachings in the *Gītā*, though it calls this the Sāṃkhya teaching. The *Gītā* derives from Sāṃkhya the notions of saṃsāra and moksha and of the actionless Purusha contrasted with the ever active Prakṛti.

But God in the *Gītā* is more than the Upanishadic Brahman or the Sāṃkhyan Purusha. He is the Supreme Person (*Purushottama*), other than the individual soul and insentient Nature, controlling them both. He is one God behind all gods. All worship ultimately goes to Him. Those who love Him for his own sake reach Him.<sup>2</sup> Thus the *Gītā* made explicit the concept of

<sup>1</sup>Some schools of Vedānta regard the *Bhāgavata P.* as the Fourth Prasthāna. For the study of the background of the three Prasthānas, vide Svami Vimalananda, 'The *Prasthāna-Traya* and its Background', *Vedānta Kesari*, XLIX, No. 12 and X, No. 1-3, 6; cf. also, Modi, P.M., 'The Doctrine of *Prasthāna Trayi*: It is valid,' *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, XVII, Pt. 1, 1967, pp. 52-8.

<sup>2</sup>Patrick Olivelle ('Concept of God in the *Bhagavadgītā*,' *International Philosophy Quarterly*, New York, Dec. 1964) complains that there are glaring inconsistencies in the teachings of the *Gītā*, particularly in respect of the metaphysical doctrines. His arguments are ably examined by H. Bhattacharya, 'Critical Observations on the Concept of God in the *Bhagavadgītā*,' *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, Vrindaban, X, No. 1, 1965, pp. 40-46.

bhakti which was only latent in the Upanishads. We have discussed this aspect of the teaching of the *Gītā* in the chapter on bhakti.

*Brahmasūtra of Bādarāyaṇa*

Even when Bādarāyaṇa wrote his *sūtra*, there existed wide differences of opinion about such topics as the characteristics of the released soul and the relation of the individual soul with Brahman. Bādarāyaṇa himself quotes the opinion of Bādari, Ātreya, Āśmarathya, Auḍulomi, Kārshṇājini and Kāśakṛtsna who flourished before him. The view of some of them on some topics are known, though their works are lost. For example Āśmarathya held the bhedābheda view of the relation of the soul to Brahman—that it is neither absolutely different nor absolutely non-different from it. Auḍulomi propounded the view that the soul is altogether different from Brahman up to the time of final release when it becomes merged in it, and Kāśakṛtsna opined that the soul is absolutely identical with Brahman which, in some way or other, presents itself as the individual soul.<sup>1</sup> The later interpreters of Vedānta usually accept one or more of these views.

The date and identity of Bādarāyaṇa is not certain. Jacobi's view that he flourished in the Gupta age is certainly wrong.<sup>2</sup> Indian tradition asserts that Bādarāyaṇa was no other than Vyāsa. As noted earlier Pāṇini refers to a *Bhikshusūtra* of Pārāśarya (the son of Parāśara Vyāsa). Gopinātha Kavirāja is of the opinion that it is the same as the *Vedāntasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa. Against this it has been urged that Bādarāyaṇa refers to the views of Jaimini and Jaimini was, according to the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, the *Mbh.* and the *Bhāgavata* a pupil of Vyāsa. Thus if Bādarāyaṇa is to be identified with Vyāsa then we should assume that the teacher and disciple both refer to each other. Śabara, Govindānanda and Ānandagiri, however do not find any inconsistency in it.<sup>3</sup> As regards the date of the *Vedāntasūtra* Keith holds that it cannot be later than 200 A.D. Indian scholars, however, generally place it in the period

<sup>1</sup>Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, II, p. 432; for a detailed study of these pre-Bādarāyaṇa Vedāntins vide Kavirāja, Gopinātha, *Bhāratīya Samskṛti aurā Sādhanā*, p. 77 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, 105.

<sup>3</sup>Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

from 500 B.C. to 200 B.C. Frazer also assigns it to 400 B.C.<sup>1</sup> We ourselves have placed it in the fifth century B.C. (*supra*).

The *Vedānta sūtra*, regarded as the Nyāya Prasthāna (Point of Departure) of Vedānta, has four chapters. The first (*samanvaya*) which begins with the sūtra *athāto Brahma-Jijñāsā*, deals with the theory of Brahman as the central reality—as the source, support and end of the world. The second (*avirodha*) meets objections brought against this view and criticises rival theories of Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Buddhist, Jaina, Pāśupata and Pāñcharātra. The third discusses the ways and means (*sādhana*) of attaining Brahman while the fourth deals with the fruits (*phala*) of Brahman.

Bādarāyaṇa affirms a monistic view of the world. He has nothing to do with polytheism or a plurality of independent and equally ultimate reals or unoriginate souls or a dualism between God and the Evil One. However his *Sūtras* reflect the indecision and vagueness characteristic of the Upanishads, whose teachings it attempts to summarize.

#### *Pre-Śaṅkara Vedāntin Āchāryas*

The *Vedāntasūtra* being brief and the *Gītā* being a synthetic treatise, both were liable to different interpretations. Therefore a number of commentaries came to be written to elaborate the doctrines of the Vedānta in the light of the new developments. The authors of the chief commentaries (*bhāṣyas*) became founders of particular schools of Vedānta. Thus we have the schools of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbārka and many others. But in the present state of our knowledge, the leap from the *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtra* to the Advaitism of Śaṅkara (788-820 A.D.) leaves an extensive gap of over one thousand years uncovered. This period saw a large number of Vedāntāchāryas whose works are now lost. Among the predecessors of Śaṅkara, whose views were akin to his, was Bhartṛhari, the famous logician and grammarian.<sup>2</sup> According to Max Müller, he

<sup>1</sup>Dr. G C. Pande places the *Vedāntasūtras* between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. (*op. cit.*).

<sup>2</sup>For the study of Advaita Vedānta before Śaṅkara, vide Aurobindo, 'Śaṅkara's Philosophy ancient Vedānta' *Mother India*, XVIII, No. 6, 1966, pp. 13-14.



died. about A.D. 650. His great philosophical works is *Vākya-pādīya*, which is more or less Buddhist in its tendencies. In his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upa.* Śaṅkara also refers to the dvaitādvaita (or bhedābheda) of Bhartṛprapañcha, according to which Brahman is at once one and dual. Hiriyanna has assigned Bhartṛprapañcha to about 600 A.D. Next we may consider Gauḍapāda who was the first systematic exponent of the Advaita Vedānta. He is reputed to be the teacher of Śaṅkara's teacher Govinda, and must have lived about the beginning of the eighth century or the end of the seventh. To him the authorship of the *Gauḍapādīyakārikās* is traditionally assigned. He is also supposed to have been the author of a commentary on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, and a commentary on the *Uttaragītā*. Walleser however, believed that Gauḍapāda was not an individual name and that the *Gauḍapādīya kārikā* cannot possibly belong to a date later than about 500 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

### *Śaṅkarāchārya : His Life and Date*

Of all the philosophical systems, the Advaita or Monist Vedānta as interpreted by Śaṅkara, has exerted the greatest influence on Indian thought. It still persists in some form or other in different parts of India.

Not many definite facts about the life-history of Śaṅkara are known.<sup>2</sup> Some of the followers of Śaṅkara compiled biographical accounts of which the chief are Mādhava's *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* (16th century) and Ānandagiri's *Śaṅkaravijaya* (12th cent.). Chidvilāsayati and Sadānanda Vyāsa also wrote some accounts and the *Skandapurāṇa* provides a few facts. But these accounts are full of miraculous episodes and of little historical value.<sup>3</sup> Much confusion has been created by the fact that his successors at the four pīṭhas established by him, were subsequently known as Śaṅkarāchāryas which made it difficult for the biographers to differentiate

<sup>1</sup>Contra, Belvalkar, *op. cit.*, p. 182 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Rao, P. Nagaraja, 'Śrī Śaṅkara: India's Great Philosopher', *Vedānta Kesari*, L, No. 2, 1963, pp. 58-62; 'Śaṅkara's Mysticism', *ABORI*, XXX, Pt. iv, 1954, pp. 84-90.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Aiyar, Krishnaswami, C.N., *Life and Times of Śaṅkara*; Upadhyaya, Baladeva, *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya*, in Hindi, Allahabad, V.B. 2020. Upadhyaya gives a list of 22 much works.



between the various personages of the same name. Even his date is not definite. According to *Guruparamparāsmṛti* preserved at Kāmakotipīṭham at Kāñchī Ādi Śaṅkara was born in 508 or 509 B.C., while the Śringerīpīṭha records place his birth in 44 B.C.<sup>1</sup> and the tradition of the Dvārakāpīṭha in 471 B.C.<sup>2</sup> The *Kerolotpatti* however places his birth in 400 A.D.<sup>3</sup>

Modern scholars also considerably differ on this point. According to Telang Śaṅkara flourished about the middle or the end of the sixth century A.D. B. Upadhyaya places him in seventh century. Sir R.G. Bhandarkar proposes A.D. 680 as the date of Śaṅkara's birth, and is even inclined to go a few years earlier. However, modern scholars generally agree with Max Müller, K.B. Pathak, S.K. Belvalkar and Macdonell who hold that Śaṅkara was born in A.D. 788, and died in A.D. 820.<sup>4</sup> That he flourished in the first quarter of the ninth century was also the view of Professor Keith.<sup>5</sup>

According to the generally accepted tradition, Śaṅkara was born in a simple hardworking family of Nambūdri Brāhmaṇas of Kālaṭi or Kālaḍi in the Cochin State (Keral) and was the son of Śivaguru and Āryambā.<sup>6</sup> He seems to have been an extraordinarily gifted child. His mother, in the course of her long and uneventful wedded life with the pious and learned Śivaguru, prior to the birth of their famous son, appears to have acquired a taste for religious-philosophical speculations, a fact which must have exerted great influence on the child Śaṅkara. He commenced regular Vedic studies at the early age of five, resolved to lead the celibate life of

<sup>1</sup>Sekhyananda, Swami, 'Historicity of Śaṅkarāchārya in the Light of Kerala Traditions and Tamil Epigraphical Records,' *Studies in Religion and Change*, ed. by Madhu Sen, 1983, pp. 73-78.

<sup>2</sup>Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>This date is given in short MS first brought to light by K.B. Pathak and also in the *Śaṅkaravijaya* of Kṛṣṇa Brahmānanda and the *Śaṅkaramandarasaurabha* of Nilakantha Bhaṭṭa (Belvalkar, *op. cit.*, p. 211).

<sup>5</sup>According to Swami Sekhyananda (*op. cit.*) Ādi Śaṅkara, born in the family of Nambūdri Brāhmaṇas, should be placed in 508 B.C. He was different from Kālaḍi Śaṅkara, born in the family of Śivadviṇambis, who flourished in 8th-9th century A.D. (contra, Belvalkar, *op. cit.*, p. 232, note).

<sup>6</sup>According to another tradition he was born at Chidambaram in South Arcot and was the son of Viśvajit and Viśiṣṭā.

an ascetic when eight, and left the household in search of a spiritual teacher two years later. This he found in Govindayati who was practising austerities in the mountains adjoining the Narmadā river where Śaṅkara is reported to have been led through a miracle. After a very brief stay with Govinda, Śaṅkara repaired to Benares where, like the Buddha, he started his regular career as a preacher and a prophet, won his first disciples and had his first successful disputation (according to legends with Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa himself, the author of the *Brahmasūtra*).

Right at the very start of his career, Śaṅkara had to face the opposition of the Mīmāṃsists, the exponents of the more rigorous orthodoxy who, even more than the Sāṃkhyas and the Buddhists, were obstacle in the path of the victory of monism. He encountered the famous Kumārila just as the latter was about to undergo (by way of a self-imposed penance for having sought to destroy his *quondam* teachers, the Buddhists) self-immolation in fire. Then he defeated and converted Maṇḍana Miśra (and Maṇḍana's wife Bhārati) and secured an ally fully equipped with the armoury of logic. According to tradition Maṇḍana became his disciple under the name of Sureśvarāchārya, though many scholars including Gopinātha Kavirāja and G.C. Pande do not accept the identity of Maṇḍana and Sureśvara.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards he met a few other minor opponents, travelled extensively and made several pupils. One of the most notable of these was a dumb son of Prabhākara, the Mīmāṃsist. Who recovered his power of speech with the grace of Śaṅkara and, as Hastāmalaka, became proficient in all the Śāstras. Another was Sanandana whose loyalty to Śaṅkara reportedly enabled him to perform the miracle of walking on the waters, in consequence of which he became celebrated as 'Padmapāda'. In the South Śaṅkara defeated the Kāpālikas also.

In his spare moments Śaṅkara composed his major and minor works. Tradition is persistent about his visit to Nepal also. In his later life he was involved in the jealousies and bickerings among his favourite disciples. He died at the age of thirty-two, the victim, we are told, of an *abhichāra* or black magic set into operation by a Śākta opponent. According to one set of traditions he died at

<sup>1</sup>Kavirāja, Gopinātha, *Bhāratiya Saṅskṛti aurā Sādhnā*, I, p. 106; Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 111.

Kāñchī; according to other sources he breathed his last at Badarikāśrama.

Though there is a tradition that Śiva was the family deity of Śaṅkara, it is also held that he was by birth a Śākta. The story of his entering the dead body of Amaruka (*parakāyapraveśa*) shows that he was an adept in yogic practices. He established four *mathas* or monasteries, of which the chief is the one at Śṛṅgerī in the former Mysore state. The others are those at Purī in the East, Dvārakā in the West, and Badarinātha in the Himalayas.

In a few years Śaṅkara practised several careers, each enough to satisfy an ordinary man. He was a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer, all rolled into one. There have been few minds more universal and versatile than his. He was rightly regarded as the *Jagadguru*. He started the practice of 'conquering the quarters' (*digvijaya*) by disputations. For Hinduism he was Dharmapalaka in the Kali Age (*Kaliyuga dharmapalaka*).<sup>1</sup>

The central texts of the Advaita school are Śaṅkara's commentaries on the principal *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Vedāntasūtra*. *Upadeśasāhasrī* and *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* reflect his general position. His popular *stotras* to the different forms of Godhead, such as *Dakṣiṇāmurtīstotra*, *Harimūdestotra*, *Ānandalaharī* and *Saundaryalaharī* explain his faith in life and justify his love of it. Other works attributed to him are *Āptavajrasūchī*, *Ātmabodha*, *Mohamudgara*, *Daśaślokī*, *Aparokṣhānubhūti* and commentaries on *Vishṇusahasranāma* and *Sanatsujātīya*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Bhaktamāla*, Chhappaya 42, quoted by Pandey, Sangamalal, *Mūla Śaṅkara Vedānta*, Allahabad, 1979, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, II, p. 450. According to Belvalkar the works which can almost confidently be called as Śaṅkara's own include 11 commentaries, 8 *stotras* and 5 *prakaraṇagranthas*. The works which are in the main unauthentic include 15 commentaries, 8 *stotras* and 8 *prakaraṇagranthas*. Apart from these there are 31 commentaries, 215 *stotras*, and 112 *prakaraṇagranthas* which are nongenuine. Most of the works which are ascribed to the first Śaṅkarāchārya but are not his, were probably composed by the later Śaṅkarāchāryas (*op. cit.*, p. 218-31).

### *Advaitavāda of Śaṅkara*

Śaṅkara interprets the Upanishads, the *Gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtra* to show that pure and unqualified monism is taught in them.<sup>1</sup> Brahman is the only reality, not only in the sense that there is nothing except Brahman but also in the sense that there is no multiplicity within Brahman. Therefore we have to explain the world not as a real creation, but as an appearance which Brahman conjures up with *māyā*, His inscrutable power. To make the conception of *māyā* more intelligible to ordinary experience, he explains it with examples of ordinary illusions of daily life such as rope appearing as a snake or a glittering shell appearing as silver. In all such cases there is a reality (e.g. rope, shell) on which something else (e.g. snake, silver) is superimposed owing to the ignorance of reality. But *māyā*, the power of Brahman is not a separate reality. It is no more different from Brahman than the power of burning is from fire. Actually *māyā* appears to be the power of Brahman only so long as one believes in the world of appearance. As soon as he realizes that the world is only apparent, that nothing is really created, he ceases to think of Brahman as a Creator.<sup>2</sup>

In view of this, Śaṅkara distinguishes between two different points of view, the ordinary or empirical (*vyāvahārika*) and the transcendental or real (*pāramārthika*). The first is the standpoint of unenlightened persons who look upon the world as real. From this point of view Brahman appears as God qualified by many qualities (Saguṇa Brahman or *Īśvara*). The second or the real (*pāramārthika*) standpoint is that of the enlightened ones who have realized that the world is an appearance and that there is nothing but Brahman. The attainment of this real standpoint is possible only by the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*) to which the cosmic illusion is due. The removal of *avidyā* leads to the realization of the truth: "I am Brahman". The soul then becomes free from all misery and from the illusory ideas that divide it from Brahman. As God

<sup>1</sup>Sankaranarayan, P., 'Intimations of Advaita in the *Gītā*', *Vedānta Kesari*, LI, No. 13, 1964, pp. 133-7; Madhavan Brahmachari, 'Advaita Vedānta—A Bird's Eye View', *Vedānta Kesari*, LII, No. 10, 1966, pp. 443-49.

<sup>2</sup>Raju, P.T., 'The Conception of Sat (Existence) in Śaṅkara's Advaita,' *ABORI*, XXXV, 1955, pp. 33-45.



is Bliss, so also is the liberated soul.<sup>1</sup>

Śaṅkara was a great critic of Buddhism and played pivotal role in its eradication from India. According to some ancient as well as modern scholars he was himself greatly influenced by it, so much so that he is accused of being a Buddhist in disguise. Others including Śrī Harsha in ancient times and T.R.V. Murti in modern age do not accept this suggestion. We have discussed the problem of Buddhist influence on Śaṅkara in the first volume of this work (p. 362). Here, however, it may be noted that the *Māṇḍukyakārikā* of Śaṅkara's *paramaguru* Gauḍapāda is permeated with Mahāyānic influence.<sup>2</sup>

The best known among Śaṅkara's immediate disciples were Sureśvara and Padmapāda. The former was known as Viśvarūpa (according to another view Maṇḍana Miśra) before he became a Sannyāsin. As Sureśvara he wrote a number of Vārttikas. Padmapāda composed a commentary called *Pañchapādika* on the earlier position of Śaṅkara's *Śārīrakabhāṣya*. After Śaṅkara Advaita continued to occupy central place in the philosophical debate of India. Among the great names of this school of the post-Śaṅkara period are included Sarvajñātmamuni (a disciple of Sureśvara), Vāchaspati Miśra (middle of 9th cent.), Śrī Harsha, etc.

#### *Rāmānuja and the Viśiṣṭādvaita School*

The teaching of the Vedānta were interpreted and developed by Rāmānuja in a different way. Before him Bhāgavatism had entered the South and made a great impact there. The hymns of the poet-saints called Āḷvārs—twelve of whom obtained canonical recognition—are commonly known as *Nālāyira Prabandham*. They were succeeded by the Āchāryas who aimed at establishing a philosophical basis for the worship of personal God and faith in the saving grace of that God.<sup>3</sup> The chief of the teachers who

<sup>1</sup>Mahadevan, T.M.P., 'The Philosophy of Śaṅkara', *Vedānta and the West*, No. 174, 1965, pp. 26-30; Aurobindo 'Śaṅkara's Philosophy and Ancient Vedānta', *Mother India*, XVIII, No. 6, 1966, pp. 13-4.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Pande G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 110; Vidhuśekhara Bhattacharya, *The Āgama śāstra of Gauḍapāda*, Calcutta, 1943, Intro.; Dasgupta, S.N., *History of Indian Philosophy*, I, pp. 422-29; contra, Mahadevan, *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, Madras, 1954, ch. IX; Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, 1955, pp. 109-17; cf. also Majumdar, A.K., *Concise History of Ancient India*, pp. 846-8.

<sup>3</sup>Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, II, p. 669.

preceded Rāmānuja were Nāthamuni and Yāmunāchārya (Ālavandār). Nāthamuni (tenth century) was a disciple of the last of the Ālvārs. He is said to have arranged their hymns. Yāmunāchārya defended the Vaishṇava Āgamas and argued that they had the same purport as the Vedas. His chief works are: *Āgamaprāmānya*, *Mahāpurushanirṇaya*, *Siddhitrayam*, *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, *Chatuṣślokī* and *Stotraratna*. The sacred literature of the Vaishṇavas is often referred to as Ubhaya Vedānta, since it included the Sanskrit Prasthānatrayī as well as the Tamil *Prabandham*. Thus it would appear that Rāmānuja's philosophy was based on some of the theistic Upanishads, portions of the *Mahābhārata*, including its Nārāyaṇīya section and the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, the Vaishṇava Āgamas and the works of the Ālvārs and Āchāryas. His own works attempt to provide a philosophy of religion by reconciling the thought of the Upanishads, the *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtra* with the faith and belief of the Vaishṇava saints.<sup>1</sup>

Rāmānuja was born as the son of Keśava Somayājī and Kāntimatī in Śrīperumbudur in the year A.D. 1027. After receiving general education given to boys of his class, he had a course in the Vedānta under Yādavaprakāśa of Conjeevaram, who had written a commentary leaning to the Advaita interpretation of Vedānta. But Rāmānuja could not agree with the interpretations of Yādava on all points. Yāmunāchārya (Ālavandār), the famous head of the maṭha at Śrīraṅgam, was impressed by Rāmānuja's learning, and thought of installing him as his successor at Śrīraṅgam. But by the time Rāmānuja arrived, Yāmuna had died. The tradition avers that when Rāmānuja approached the body of Yāmuna he saw three of the five fingers of the right hand folded. The disciples explained this to mean that he had three unfulfilled desires, the chief of them being the composition of an easy commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*.<sup>2</sup> Rāmānuja returned to Conjeevaram, became a sannayāsin and afterwards settled down at Śrīraṅgam where he composed *Vedāntasāra*, *Vedārthasaṃgraha*, *Vedāntādīpa* and the commentaries on the *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtra*. The learned Vaishṇavas gave approval to his exposition of the *Brahmasūtra* and it became *the* commentary (Śrī Bhāṣya) for them.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* Cf. Srinivasachari, P.N., 'The Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja', *CHI*, III, pp. 300-312.

<sup>2</sup>The other two desires were the recovery of an image of Śrī Rāma and the popularisation of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy.

Rāmānuja toured South India widely, restored Vaishṇava temples and converted a large number of people to Vaishṇavism. His influence is visible throughout the later history of Hinduism. The movements of Madhva, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Rāmānanda, Kabir and Nanak were considerably indebted to him.

According to Rāmānuja God is the only Reality. There is no distinction between Brahman and Īśvara. He is possessed of all supremely good qualities like omniscience and omnipotence. Within Him exist as parts different unconscious (*achit*) material objects as well as conscious souls (*chit*). Just as a spider spins the cobweb out of his own body, so God creates the world of material objects out of matter (*achit*) which eternally exists in Him. The souls are infinitely small (*aṇu*) substances. They also exist eternally. By their very nature they are conscious and self-luminous. Every soul is endowed with a material body in accordance with its deeds. Bondage of the soul means its confinement to this body caused by ignorance. Moksha is complete dissociation of the soul from the body.

God is the only object worthy of love. He is pleased by devotion and releases the devotee from bondage. The liberated soul becomes similar to God, because like God it is pure consciousness free from imperfections; but it does not become identical with God, as the finite can never become infinite.

According to Rāmānuja, as Īśvara or God is the only Reality and there is nothing outside God (though within God there are many other realities) creation of the world and the objects created are all as real as God. His philosophy is therefore, not unqualified monism (*advaita*) but a monism of the one (God) qualified by the presence of many—conscious souls and unconscious matter (*Viśiṣṭādvaita*) (cf. p. 15 f.).

### *Other Forms of Vedānta*

Another leading form of reaction against Śaṅkara's Advaitism was the dualistic philosophy associated with the name of Madhva (b. 1199 A.D.). Madhva is also known as Pūrṇaprajña and Ānandatīrtha. He developed his dualistic philosophy during his discussions with his guru Achyutapreksha, a follower of Śaṅkara's school. Madhva wrote a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* and justified his interpretation of it in another work called



*Anuvyākhyāna*. His commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Upanishads, his epitome of the *Mahābhārata* called *Bhārataatāparyanirṇaya* and the gloss on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also help to understand his philosophical ideas.

Madhva stood for unqualified dualism and insisted on the five great distinctions of God and the individual soul, God and matter, the individual soul and matter, one soul and another, and one part of matter and another.<sup>1</sup>

Nimbārka was a Telugu Brāhmaṇa of Vaishṇava faith. He flourished some time after Rāmānuja and before Madhva, about the eleventh century A.D. He wrote a short commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* called *Vedāntapārijātasaurabha*, as well as ten verses, *Daśaślokī*, elucidating his view of the distinctness of Jīva, Īśvara and Jagat. His theory is called *Dvaitādvaita*, or dualistic non-dualism.<sup>2</sup> Keśavakaśmīrin wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, called *Tattvapraśāṅgikā*, in defence of Nimbārka's general philosophy.

Vallabha (1401 A.D.) was also a Telugu Brāhmāṇa of South India, who migrated to the North. He developed the views of Viṣṇusvāmin who belonged to the thirteenth century. He accepted the authority not only of the Upanishads, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahmasūtra*, but also of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In his works, *Aṇubhāshya*, *Siddhāntarahasya* and *Bhāgavataṭīkāsubodhinī*, he offers a theistic interpretation of Vedānta which differs from those of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. His view is called *Śuddhādvaita* or pure non-dualism and declares that the whole world is real and is subtly Brahman.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, we may note the attempt of some ancient thinkers to prove that the six systems of Hindu philosophy are not really opposed to each other, but they all proclaim the same eternal Truth. This view is found first in the *Prabodhachandrodaya*, an allegorical Sanskrit drama written in the court of the Chandella king Kīrttivarman (latter half of the eleventh century A.D.). In a famous scene of this drama there is a dispute between the Buddhists the Jainas and the followers of other heterodox sects on the one

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Raghavendrachar, H.N., 'Madhva's Brahma Mimāṃsā,' *CHI*, III, pp. 313-32.

<sup>2</sup>Chaudhuri, Roma, 'The Nimbārka School of Vedānta,' *CHI*, III, pp. 333-346.

<sup>3</sup>For details, cf. Bhatt, G.H., 'The School of Vallabha,' *CHI*, III, pp. 347-59.



side, and the Vaishnavas, Śaivas and Sauras, aided by the six schools of philosophy, on the other. It bring out the basic unity of orthodox Hinduism as against the heterodox sects. Vijñāna Bhikshu, a Sāṃkhya philosopher of the sixteenth century, also proclaimed the essential unity of the six systems of philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

### *Chārvāka (Lokāyata) School*

The Chārvāka school of thought, also known as the Lokāyata system, was the materialist school of Indian philosophy. Its supporters did not believe in the authority of the Vedas, denounced Vedic sacrifices, rejected the belief in soul, god, heaven and hell and also in *śrāddha* institution, pilgrimages (*tīrtha yātra*), *vratas*, etc. They believed in the existence of four elements only and regarded perception (*pratyaksha anubhava*) as the only means of knowledge. Garbe, D. Chattopadhyaya and G. C. Pande feel that this school originated in the pre-Buddhist period. Probably it arose as a reaction against the excessive ritualism of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the idealism of the *Upanishads*.

Bṛhaspati is regarded as the traditional founder of this school. His *Sūtra*, the existence of which we have no reason to doubt, has unfortunately perished. Sometimes this Bṛhaspati is identified with Devaguru Bṛhaspati who is said to have propagated materialism among the asuras so that they might be ruined. Chārvāka, after whose name this school is so called, is said to have been the chief disciple of Bṛhaspati. According to another view, Chārvāka himself was the founder of this school, while according to a third view the word 'Chārvāka' is not a proper name but a common name given to the materialists and signifies a person who believes in the maxim 'eat, drink and be marry' (the root '*charv*' means 'to eat'), or a person who eats up all moral and ethical values, or who is 'sweet-tongued' (*chāruvāk*). References to the Chārvākas are also found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Māhābhārata* and *Manusmṛti*. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* we find a reference to Ajita-Keśakambalin (probably so called because he wore blanket of hair), a materialist who believed only in perception and in four elements. Śāntarakṣita refers to him as Kambalāśvatara (the man with the blanket and a mule).

<sup>1</sup>Majumdar, R.C., 'Evolution of Religio-Philosophical Culture in India', *CHI*, IV, p. 50.

No original work of the Chārvāka school is extant except for a very late work *Tattvopaplavasīmha* of Jayarāśibhaṭṭa published by the Oriental Institute, Baroda, in 1940. Our chief sources of information about the Chārvākas are, therefore, the quotations from the *Bṛhaspatīsūtra* found in some later philosophical works and the summary of its doctrines as given in the play *Prabodhachandrodaya* of Kṛṣṇapati Miśra, *Trishasṭīśālākāpurushacharita* of Hemachandra, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* of Mādhava, the *Naishadharita*, etc. But these works quote the views of the Chārvākas only to refute them. Therefore what we get in them is the caricature of their doctrines, and not a true picture.<sup>1</sup>

In the Chārvāka philosophy perception is regarded as the only valid source of knowledge. The validity of inference is rejected as a leap into the dark. Thus the Chārvākas admit the existence of four elements—earth, water, fire and air—only (*Prthivyāpatejovāyurītatattvāni*) and reject the fifth, the ether, because it is not perceived but inferred. Similarly they reject soul, god, heaven, etc. because they are not seen. This view has been criticised by all systems of Indian philosophy. To refuse the validity of inference is to refuse, think and discuss. All thoughts, all discussions, all doctrines, all proofs and disproofs are made possible by inference. The critics of the Chārvākas pointedly ask : when a Chārvāka goes out of his house his wife cannot see him. Does it mean that she becomes a widow during his absence ? We perceive the earth as flat but by inference know that it is almost round. We perceive the earth as static but infer that it is moving round the sun. We perceive the disc of the sun as of small size, but infer that it is much bigger than the earth.

According to the Chārvākas everything which exists, including bodies, senses, objects and mind, exists due to a particular combination of the four elements. The elements are eternal, but their combinations undergo production and dissolution. Consciousness or soul is regarded as a mere product of matter (*Dehātmavāda*). It arises from matter like the intoxicating quality arising from the fermented sugar.

<sup>1</sup>According to C. Kunhan Raja ('Cārvāka Systems', *Philosophical Quarterly*, Amalner, XXXVI, No. 1, 1963, pp. 15-31) it is the Chārvākas who continued the thought-pattern of the *Rgveda*, and it is the later systems of philosophy that have deviated from it.



The Chārvākas regard sensual pleasure as the *summum bonum* of life. Eat, drink and be merry (*ṛṇaṁ kṛtvā ghṛtaṁ pibet*), for once the body is reduced to ashes, there is no hope of coming back here again. There is no other world. Death is identical with moksha. All religious ceremonies are means of livelihood of the priests. If a beast slain in a sacrifice goes to heaven why then does the sacrificer not sacrifice his own father? If beings in heaven are gratified by our offerings in the śrāddha here, why then not give food from down below to those who are standing on the house-top? The Vedas have no authority. They were written, in the view of Chārvākas, by men-cheats, hypocrites and flesh-eaters. Their language is utter gibberish. Reference is also made to certain unclean customs connected with the horse-sacrifice. Of Dharma, Artha Kāma and Moksha—only Kāma or sensual pleasure is regarded as the end (*Kāma evaikaḥ Purushārthaḥ*) and Artha or wealth is regarded as the means to realize that end. Dharma and Moksha are altogether rejected.

The Chārvāka philosophy never became popular in India. It was denounced as the philosophy of the low-cultured people (*prākṛtajanāḥ*). The very word Lokāyata means ordinary (uncultivated) people. The *Rāmā*. describes the Chārvākas as fools who thought themselves to be wise (*Paṇḍitamānināḥ*) and as experts in leading people to destruction (*anarthakuśalāḥ*). Its unpopularity has been explained as due to its rejection of the authority of the Vedas, denouncement of the Brāhmaṇa priests, rejection of God, denial of the soul, and assertion of the reality of matter. But most of these features are found in Buddhism and Jainism also. The main causes of its unpopularity should, therefore, be sought in its denial of all those human values which make life worth-living. Life without values is animal life. Sensual pleasure is a mere shadow of the supreme pleasure. There is a qualitative difference in the various types of pleasure. The pleasure of the pig is certainly not the same as the pleasure of the philosopher.<sup>1</sup> According to general Hindu thinking man is not merely a biological animal; he is a rational and a moral creature<sup>2</sup>. He should, therefore, instead

<sup>1</sup>Compare the difference between the hedonism of Bentham with that of J.S. Mill.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 26.

of falling down to the level of the beast, transform the animal pleasure into human pleasure by means of self-control, education, culture and spiritual discipline.

### *Indian Atheism*

Here we may add a few words on the prevalence of atheism (in the sense of disbelief in the existence of a creator God) in ancient India. It is of course true that "For the Hindus, a system of philosophy is an insight, a *darśana*. To know God is to become divine, free from any outside influence".<sup>1</sup> It is also true that belief in the existence of God was and is deeply rooted in the Hindu mind. But it is also true that atheism played quite an important role, though it was never so popular as some scholars such as Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and N.N. Bhattacharya have tried to prove.<sup>2</sup> The earlier exponents of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools excluded God from their systems. According to the earlier Sāṃkhya the belief in the existence of God is unnecessary and unproved. God as the creator of world had no room in the philosophical system of the Jainas and the early Buddhists also. Similarly the Chārvākas, as seen above, believed that the world is a spontaneous growth promoted by the chance-combination of material elements and that no intervention of God is needed in creation. Thus, quite a big portion of the ancient Indian people was atheist.

<sup>1</sup>Radhakrishnan, S., *Ind. Phil.*, I, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Chattopadhyaya, Debiprasad, *Indian Atheism*; Bhattacharya, N.N., *History of Indian Cosmogonical Ideas*; 'The Role of Atheism in Indian Thought', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 57 ff.



### Chapter 3

## Epic-Pauranika Pantheon and Avataravada

#### *Transformation of the Vedic Pantheon*

In the later sections of the *Rāmā*. (i.e. the first part of the *Bālakāṇḍa* and the whole of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*), the later portions of the *Mbh.* and the *Purāṇas* we find a pantheon which grew out of but was, in many ways, different from the Vedic Pantheon.

This epic-Paurāṇika pantheon is the pantheon of modern India. In the centuries preceding and succeeding the birth of Christ we have signs of a new religious consciousness which converted the ancient Vedic-Brāhmaṇical religion into present-day Hinduism. The introduction of sectarian religion based on the worship of personal gods in place of the Vedic-Brāhmaṇical community-worship is the main symptom of this change. The object and mode of worship, priestly hierarchy, purpose of worship, all were transformed; but the most evident change is found in gods and goddesses and their nature because in order to become personal gods able to fulfil new desires they had to acquire new personalities. Those gods who did not change, gradually lost their status and popularity, yielding their place to deities of comparatively late origin such as Durgā, Kālī, Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, Lakshmī, Kāma, etc. around whom there grew rich and complex rituals and myths.

The Vedic Aryans were worshippers of the deified natural forces which were theoretically grouped in equal numbers under three categories, each headed by a deity of special character and significance. These thirty-three divinities (eleven terrestrial, eleven atmospheric and eleven celestial)<sup>1</sup> may be regarded as the nucleus

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed study of the classification of the early Vedic gods, cf. the first volume of the present work, *RHAI*, I, Ch. 3.

of the epic-Paurāṇika pantheon.<sup>1</sup> Their names and classification however varied considerably even in the Vedic texts.<sup>2</sup> The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upanishad*,<sup>3</sup> for example, though retains the number thirty-three to denote the total number of divinities, yet it regroups them into eight Vasus, twelve Ādityas, eleven Rudras, Indra and Prajāpati while the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* substitutes Indra by Vashaṭkāra. In the *Rāmā.* also though the total number of these deities stands at thirty-three, yet Indra (or Vashaṭkāra) and Prajāpati are substituted by the Aśvinikumāras.

### *Rise of the Triad of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva*

According to the *Bṛhadāranyaka* the eleven Rudras were the guardian-deities of the ten sense-organs and mind. Similarly, the twelve months of the year are said to be symbolic of the twelve Ādityas without any specific reference to the months special to each one of them. In course of time however the Ādityas, who included both Indra and Viṣṇu, gradually lost importance, except Viṣṇu. The Vasus were absorbed into Agni, and the latter came to be transformed into Rudras. The Rudras were also ultimately absorbed into Rudra-Śiva. Similarly Vedic Prajāpati was assimilated into Brahmā. Thus the early Ṛgvedic gods, who held prominent positions, lost their significance and some of them, such as Aśvins and Ushā became almost completely extinct and some, like Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuṇa and Vāyu subsisted only as minor functionaries—as the Diggpālas. In the transformed pantheon the most eminent position was occupied by Viṣṇu (once a mere accomplice and associate of Indra in latter's exploits against the asuras) and Rudra-Śiva (once regarded as a minor malevolent deity) and Brahmā (who in the early Vedic age was nowhere in the picture). These three, specially

<sup>1</sup>Cf. J.P. Singhal. 'Ṛgvedika aurā Paurāṇika Devataon kā Antara', *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, I, 1963, pp. 57-62. He rightly points out that the Vedic gods were immortal because they were regarded as natural forces, while the Paurāṇika gods became immortal because they drank nectar after the *Samudramanthana*. Further the number of the Vedic gods is 33 while the Paurāṇika gods are 33 crores.

<sup>2</sup>Tiwari, Arya Ramachandra G., 'Evolution of the Brāhmaṇical Pantheon', *Aruṇa Bhāratī*, Prof. A.L. Jani Felicitation Volume, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, p. 9 ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Bṛh. Upa.*, Gita Press ed., p. 787 (*Vasava ekādaśa Rudrādvādaśa-Ādityāsta ekatrimśadIndraśchaiva Prajāpatiścha trayastrimśāvītī*).

the first two, shot themselves into such great prominence that all other deities were thrown into second rate, even third rate, positions. In the personality of these three were now co-ordinated the three cosmic principles of creation, preservation and destruction. Thus was borne the triad or trinity of the Indian pantheon recognised by the Epics and the Purāṇas. The *Mbh.* has anecdotes to relate how these three gods act in unison to perform deeds of cosmic significance. Sometimes Śiva is shown as born of Brahmā, or *vice versa*. At other times Vishṇu is created by Brahmā or *vice versa*. In some stories Śiva and Vishnu pay homage to each other, both to Brahmā and Brahmā to each and to both. Thus no clear line of demarcation is drawn to separate their stations or functions.<sup>1</sup> But the invocation of these three gods in times of crises proves that they were regarded as having a status more exalted than that of the other gods.<sup>2</sup>

The triad of Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva is more clearly recognized in the Purāṇas. There are numerous passages in these works which show them as in charge of the three cosmic functions. Thus in the *Kūrma P.* Vishṇu says : "Brahmā creates, I preserve, and Śiva destroys". The *Vishṇu P.* states : "The Creator creates His own self (in creation), Vishṇu preserves and in the end the Ender annihilates". In the *Matsya P.* we read : 'Brahmā creates all living beings and inanimate matter; Vishṇu preserves them and bestows growth on them; at the end of an aeon Rudra destroys creation'. The three gods are distinguished by the spiritual attributes which are peculiar to them. According to the *Vāyu P.* Rajas, the creative active principle, inheres in Brahmā ; Sattva, the unattached passive attribute, belongs to Vishṇu ; and Tamas, the dark and fierce attribute, inheres in Śiva. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya* Vishṇu is told by Śiva "Know thyself as Prakṛti and me as Śiva, the Purusha : Thou art half my body, so am I Thine".<sup>3</sup>

### *Incompatibility of Vishṇu and Śiva*

However as pointed out by Sukmari Bhattacharji, there is something conceptually irreconcilable between Vishṇu and Śiva. These two fundamentally symbolize two contrary principles—the solar and lunar. Even in ritualistic details, this incompatibility

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *op. cit.*, p. 356. It was nothing but henotheism of the *RV* in the epic-Paurāṇika garb.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 358 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 357.

may be noticed. 'Bilva' leaves are sacred to Śiva and taboo to certain sections of the Vaishṇavas. Tulasī leaves are similarly sacred to the Vaishṇavas (they are Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's lover in leaf-form, known also as Vishṇupriyā) and are taboo to the Śāktas. Dūrvā grass is offered without the inner shoot to Śiva and the Manes; and with the inner shoot to Vishṇu and the solar deities. The Śālagrāma and Śivaliṅga are mutually exclusive taboos to the two sects. 'Yantras' are metal plaques with intricate diagrams and formulas, but without figures worshipped by the Śāktas; 'Paṭṭas' are such plaques with figures of Vishṇu and his ten incarnations worshipped by the Vaishṇavas.<sup>1</sup> Even the cultic practices of the Vaishṇavas and Śaivas are opposed to each other. The *Nārada Pāñcharātra Samhitā* says, "by the Tāntrikas who practise magic Śiva should be worshipped with fierce vows, with corpses, fuel, cow-dung and ashes". Hari, on the other hand, is fond of worship offered with purity. The pūjā of Vishṇu has more aesthetically pleasing votive offerings than that of Śiva. According to the *Padma P.* the Śālagrāma, the symbol of Vishṇu, should not be touched by women and the Sūdras, while the Śivaliṅga may be touched by all.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Fundamental Unity of Godhead*

However, time softened much of the sharp edge of this rivalry and each sect in its attempt to elevate its god to the supreme status felt obliged to incorporate some traits of the rival sect's god. Much in this field was done by the notion of the fundamental unity of Godhead and the idea that its division is merely functional. In the Upanishads Brahman is regarded as free of guṇas; the illusory functions of creation, preservation and destruction attributed to Him are actually performed when he becomes Īśvara through the illusory superimposition of the attributes. This idea was not given up by the Purāṇas and the fundamental unity or oneness of the three was clearly recognised. The *Vāyu P.* states: "As Brahmā he creates the creatures, as Kāla he destroys them, as Puruṣa he remains indifferent—these are the three stages of Prajāpati". Or as the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* states, the one Self-create Kāla performs the three tasks in three (forms): creates the creatures, kindly preserves

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*



and destroys them (too). The *Kūrma P.* also says : "three are (His) forms, the cause of creation, preservation and destruction; the Sattva-self is the Lord Vishṇu who ever stabilizes creation ; Brahmā the Rajas-self creates and Hara the Tāmāsa destroys"<sup>1</sup>. In Vaishṇavism Vishṇu is said to be the essence behind these manifestations, while in the Śaiva Purāṇas and Tantras all this is attributed to Śiva (and in the Sākta Purāṇas to Śakti or Devī).<sup>2</sup>

Thus in these three gods, Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva, sometimes regarded as the manifestation of One, we have a trinity of the truly 'high gods' of India, the gods of the orthodox religion. All the other gods are shown as reducible to these three, the lunar gods were reduced to Śiva, the solar gods to Vishṇu, and the creator-gods to Brahmā.

### *Minor Gods and Goddesses*

Besides consolidating the image of the major sectarian gods, the Purāṇas also introduce many minor gods as distinct epiphanies of these two. Thus we have Kārttikeya, Gaṇapati, Kubera, Durgā, Kāma and Kāla in the Śiva group and Lakshmī and the several incarnations of Vishṇu in the Vishṇu group. In Vaishṇavism specially Rāma and Kṛṣṇa came to be identified with Vishṇu and thus got themselves elevated to the supreme position. In this process Brahmā was for all practical purposes eliminated from the scene through coalescence into Agni, leaving Vishṇu and Rudra-Śiva in the field.

The large number of goddesses which loom large on the Later Vedic, Epic and Paurāṇika horizons both in Vaishṇavism and Śaivism are the progeny of the non-Aryan female deities first witnessed on the pre-Vedic Indus Valley seals.<sup>3</sup> Since then the adoration of Śakti (Supreme Energy) conceived anthropomorphically as a female deity was continuously popular.<sup>4</sup> Belief in the several forms of Pārvatī, Sarasvatī, Lakshmī and a host of several other goddesses both in Śaivism and Vaishṇavism is attributable only to the influence of

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

<sup>2</sup>Tiwari, Arya Ramachandra G. 'Evolution of the Brāhmaṇical Pantheon', *Aruṇa Bhārati*, Prof. A. L. Jani Felicitation Volume, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Tiwari, A.R.G., *op. cit.*, p. 9 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Ch. 2 of the *RHAI*.

this tradition. In the resurgence of these mother-goddesses in the epic-Paurāṇika religion as the Mātṛkās the various aspects of the fundamental feminine divinity assume new dimensions. Thus Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaishṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Chāmuṇḍā are the expressions of the changed needs of the times when goddesses largely replaced their consorts in rituals.

In the epic-Paurāṇika religion innumerable minor and local gods were also recognised as village deities, tutelary gods and goddesses of specific regions (like cremation grounds, temples, mounds), disease-goddesses, fierce spirits, tree or animal spirits, ancestor-spirits, sanctuary spirits and local spirits. Worship of trees like pīpal was revived. The practice of the worship of all these minor deities was already there, for it is a timeless and world-wide phenomenon; only it was pushed into the background in the Vedic religion for some centuries. But the ethical miscegenation and cultural commingling of the Aryans with the earlier races of India, discussed in the first volume of this work (Ch. 5), now led to their re-emergence.

Thus in the epic-Paurāṇika religion while, on the one hand, we have a great triad with cosmic functions of the first magnitude and the truly 'high' appeal to the imagination and intellect, on the other we have innumerable deities of 'lower' category which dominate the popular imagination and fill the hiatus between an intellectual minority and the vast illiterate majority. It is true that the various regional and functional deities, the 'low-gods', are sought to be explained as manifestations of the 'high gods', but their actual worshippers never bothered themselves with this exposition; they believe in it unconsciously, as an underlying *saṃskāra* of their psyche.<sup>1</sup>

The multiplication and proliferation of gods and goddesses is explained in as early a text as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*. According to this work when Brahman, being alone, found itself incapable of any action, It created a number of divinities of the Kshatriya (warrior) category, viz. Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Medhā, Mṛtyu, Īśāna, etc. When It did not feel satisfied, It created another batch of deities of the Vaiśya category viz. Rudras, Ādityas, Viśvedevas, Maruts, etc. who were called the *gaṇas*, i.e.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. S. Bhattacharji, *op. cit.*, p. 361 f.

gods who were members of one or another particular group (*gaṇa*). Lastly, still, feeling dissatisfied, It created Pūshan who belonged to the Śūdra category. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* attributes the origin of gods to the spilled out seed of Prajāpati during his attempt at incest with his daughter Ushā.<sup>1</sup>

*Role of epic-Paurāṇika Pantheon in the Emotional Unification of the Country*

The phenomenon of the epic-Paurāṇika religion, specially its pantheon, is truly amazing. Here we have all the known elements of all the stages of a religion from the primitive to the most advanced — ancestor-worship (in *srāddha*, *piṇḍapitṛyajña* and Yama-worship), worship of spirits (*Ḍākinīs*, *Śākinīs*, *Piśāchas*, *Yakshas*, *Gandharvas*, and *Kinnaras*), worship of cosmic elements (in *Agni*, *Sūrya*, *Soma*, *Ushā*, *Vāyu*, *Dyaus* and *Prthivī*), of mother-goddess (*Prthivī*, *Aditi*, *Durgā*, *Kālī* and *Ambikā*), of culture-heroes (*Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa*, *Pradyumna*, *Aniruddha*, *Sāmba*, etc.), of the dwarf (*Vāmana*) and the child (the boy *Kṛṣṇa*), theriolatry (*Hanumat*, *Saramā matsya*, tortoise, Śiva's bull, *Pārvatī*'s lion, other cultic birds or beasts surviving as mounts such as the swan of *Brahmā* and *Sarasvatī*, the peacock of *Kārttikeya*, the elephant of *Indra*, *Garuḍa* of *Vishṇu*, the mouse of *Gaṇeśa*, the buffalo connected with *Yama*, etc.), ophiolatry (in *Vāsuki* and *Ananta*), tree-worship (in the sanctity of the banyan, *bilva* and *pīpala* trees and the *tulasī* plant) and stone-worship (in the *Śālagrāma*, the stone emblem of *Vishṇu*, and the *Śivaliṅga* of Śiva). Then in the final stage there is absolute monism of *Vedānta* (with *Brahman* as the only Reality). The fundamental catholicity of epic-Paurāṇika religion denies nothing and tolerates every level or phase of religious consciousness. It helped its followers to bring under one umbrella the various sects and creeds and provide a conceptual unification to the country.<sup>2</sup> Even though the sectarian followers of some of these deities clashed with one another or each other at some local levels as the Paurāṇika stories avow, these were mere aberrations in the prolonged intercultural dialogue while on the broad national level there continued to exist remarkable religious harmony and social amity. As pointed out by Tiwari,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Tiwari, *op. cit.*, p. 14 f.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *op. cit.*, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup>Tiwari, *op. cit.*, p. 20.



the temple complexes of Chittor, Ekaliṅgi. Nāgadā (near Ekaliṅgi), Purī, etc. in North India and of Ellora, Bādāmī, Belur, Halebid, Hampi, Śrīraṅgam (near Tiruchirapalli), Jambukeśvara (near Śrīraṅgam), Rameśvaram, etc., in the southern part of the country provide a visual testimony of the actual cultural-cum-emotional unity of the epic-Paurāṇika religion. In several of these temples the main deity may be Śaivaite or Vaishṇavite but the gods and goddesses of other sects are also given an honoured place. The images found in these shrines are, as if, the cultural emissaries of the remote racio-cultural units signing on behalf of their respective followers.

### *Avatāravāda : its Meaning*

The most important aspect of the epic-Paurāṇika pantheon is the doctrine of *avatāra*. The term *avatāra*, usually translated as 'incarnation' in English, is applied to the act of a divine or supernatural being in assuming the form of a man or an animal and continuing to live in that form upon earth for some time for the fulfilment of the particular objective for which that form is assumed. An *avatāra* is thus distinguished from transmigration in which the transmigrating entity is not a deity but a soul; from 'possession' in which a spirit takes up abode in a human body temporarily and not for the whole life; from 'emanation' which implies a divine source but not the actual presence of the deity; from the different manifestations of a deity which may co-exist with each other; and from the capacity of deities or holy men to assume on occasions whatever form they please.<sup>1</sup> Among Western people the idea of incarnation seems to have originated in Egypt and then, with Hellenism as its medium,<sup>2</sup> to have reached its highest form in Christianity<sup>3</sup> and heterodox Islam<sup>4</sup> though it should always be kept in mind that the Christian concept of resurrection being a solitary exception and

<sup>1</sup>Sönderblom, N., in *ERE*, 7, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. George Stock, in *ERE*, 7, p. 192 f.

<sup>3</sup>Plott, John C., *A Philosophy of Devotion*, Delhi, 1974, p. 508.

<sup>4</sup>The Shī'ite doctrine that the right of succession to Mohammad belongs to the descendants of Alī, the prophet's cousin, and of Fātimā, his daughter, implied, among other things, that they, by virtue of their blood relationship, inherit a divine light-substance (*ERE*, 7, p. 183; G. A. Barton, *ibid.*, p. 197 f.).



something unique did not have all the elements of the epic-Paurāṇika *avatāravāda* according to which there have been many incarnations of the Deity and there may be many more in the future.<sup>1</sup>

The term *avatāra* is derived from the root *avtṛ* (to descend, to come down). It is not used in early works. The *Gītā* and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* use such words as *janman* (birth), *sambhava* (coming into being), *srjana* (creation), and *prādurbhāva* (appearance) for expressing the idea of incarnation. As pointed out by Suvira Jaiswal the *Vishṇudharmottara* (with the exception of the interpolated passages) nowhere uses the word *avatāra* and the *Harivaṃśa* describes the incarnations of Viṣṇu as his *prādurbhāvas*. However, later on the term *avatāra* became the more popular one.

#### *Popularity of Avatāravāda in India*

The doctrine of *avatāra* is a fundamental one in Hinduism. It is a distinctive feature of Vaiṣṇavism; we shall discuss its role and the various *avatāras* of Viṣṇu in the chapters on Vaiṣṇavism. Here we propose to investigate its origin, general nature, design and significance because though of special significance in Vaiṣṇavism, it has been quite popular in other Indian religions and sects. The Buddhists, for example, made the Buddha pass through many *avatāras* before he attained Buddhahood. To illustrate his former births they appropriated the ancient folk tales and represented them in the form of the Jātaka stories. The idea was further developed in Mahāyāna Buddhism which believes in the incarnation of the bodhisattvas who after the state of the *maraṇabhava* (being in the dying state) pass through the state of *antarābhava* (being in the intermediary state) before entering *upapattibhava* (state of being reborn; conception). The bodhisattvas do not incarnate in the same way as the other human beings are reborn: they know beforehand where and in whose womb they are to reborn and enter the womb knowing that they are entering it. The Pratyekabuddhas, while remaining in the womb know in addition that they are there and the Buddhas leave the womb in full consciousness of what they are doing.<sup>2</sup> The acceptance of the doctrine of *avatāra* in Buddhism was probably the result of impact of Brāhmaṇism on it, though

<sup>1</sup>Kane, P.V., *HD*, V, ii, p. 992.

<sup>2</sup>Poussin, L. De La Vallée, in *ERE*, 7, p. 187 f.

Suvira Jaiswal holds a contrary view ; for as we will see below, the doctrine had emerged, in incipient form atleast, long before the advent of Buddhism.

The Jainas also had their theory of incarnation. They believed that the avatāras always come in opposed pairs, as Nārāyaṇa and Prati-Nārāyaṇa, Balabhadra and Prati-Balabhadra, the former of the pair representing the force of good and latter the force of evil, as Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Each requires the other for its *svarūpa siddhi*—self-manifestation. The more intense the opposition of the two, clearer the definition of each.<sup>1</sup>

In the epic-Paurāṇika Hinduism, apart from Vaishṇavism *avatāravāda* is specially recognised in Śāktism; in most other sects it finds recognition but plays a comparatively minor role. As pointed out by H. Jacobi most of the various forms under which Śiva is adored as Rudra, Bhava, Mahākāla, Ardhanārīśvara, etc. are not his avatāras because unlike the avatāras of Viṣṇu they are not limited and successive manifestations of the deity; they coexist with each other. However, his avatāras such as Lakulīśa are also known.

### *Antiquity of Avatāravāda*

The germs of the doctrine of avatāra and the stories of the various avatāras have been traced to the religious beliefs of the prehistoric races.<sup>2</sup> So far as the Vedic Aryans are concerned, it has been pointed out that a Ṛgvedic passage refers to Viṣṇu as having assumed another form in battle, and Gonda has reminded that in the *RV* Indra is said to roam about in several forms.<sup>3</sup> It may also be pointed out that the *Nirukta* speaks of some deities who are said to have both human and non-human forms. It may be that these ideas contributed to the concrete formulation of the incarnation theory, but its origin and references to the root-ideas of some of the well-known avatāras—Kūrma, Mātṛya, Vāmana, Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, etc.—can hardly be placed before the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanishadic texts (cf. the stories of Manu and Fish, Kūrma, Varāha and Vāmana in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and of Devakīputra

<sup>1</sup>Bhagwan Das, *Krishna : A Study in the Theory of Avatars*, Bombay, 1962, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>*RHAI*, I, Ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Gonda, J., *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, Delhi, 1969, p. 124.

Kṛshṇa in the *Chhândogya Upanishad*) specially because the belief in *avatāravāda* could come into existence only after the wide acceptance of the theory of rebirth or *samsāravāda* which, as we have seen, began to become popular in the Vedic society for the first time in the Later Vedic Age.<sup>1</sup> There are only two major differences between the doctrine of *avatāra* and the theory of rebirth. Firstly, an *avatāra* is of the Divine Spirit or Over-Soul (conceived variously as Vishṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Ādi Buddha, etc.) while rebirth is of an individual soul. And secondly, the Divine Spirit incarnates itself to redeem men and creation, while a man is reborn because of his *karmans* or deeds. It may however be noted that the doctrine of *avatāra* is sometimes related with the theory of *karman*. The stories of the curses (*śāpas*) laid upon the high gods, usually by the ṛshis, in accordance with which these gods take birth as greater or lesser *avatāras*, are clearly intended to show that while the *avatāras* adjust the good and bad *karmans* of others, in the process they expiate their own evil *karmans* also. Similarly, the *avatāras* of evil exhaust by their self-willed bad deeds the virtues and stores of merit they accumulate in their earlier births by severe penances. The ten-headed Rāvaṇa won the golden city of *Laṅkā* formerly belonging to Kubera by the sacrifice of his own heads in the course of his *tapas* lasting for 'thousands of years', but exhausted his thus acquired merits by his evil deeds.

#### *Avatāravāda in its Classical Form*

Though the idea that gods may and do assume animal or human form was known earlier, but the doctrine of *avatāra* of the epic-Paurāṇika religion is something different. In the words of Prof. G.C. Pande, "The incarnation or *avatāra* is not a casual but a historical manifestation of God. God incarnates Himself in the human race in an age of moral crisis in order to set right the balance of right and wrong. Although ever unborn and unchangeable, the lord of all beings, He takes birth controlling His power of Nature as a divine mystery. But his incarnation in history is not unique. He is born in every age when virtue declines and evil flourishes to protect the virtuous and destroy the evil-doers and establish the moral order. His human birth and career are divine

<sup>1</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 241 ff.

miracles which all men are not really able to comprehend. In fact, 'fools may despise God in human form' but those who recognise Him are saved".<sup>1</sup> In the Durgāsaptaśatī of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* the Mother-Goddess declares: "Thus Whenever (*yadā yadā*) trouble will arise caused by the Dānavas, (*bādha Dānavotthā bhaviṣhyati*) at each such time (*talā tadā*) I shall become incarnate (*avatīryāham*) and accomplish the foes destruction (*karishyāmyarisamkshayam*)"<sup>2</sup>. But the *locus classicus* for the descent of God in different forms is found in the *Bhagavadgītā*. In it Lord Kṛṣṇa assures humanity through Arjuna thus: "O Bhārata (= Arjuna), whenever (*yadā yadā*) there is decline of righteousness (*dharmasya glānirbhavati*) and unrighteousness is in the ascendant (*abhyutthānamadharmaḥ*) then (*tadā*) I create Myself (*Ātmānam sṛjāmyaham*). For the protection of the virtuous (*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām*) and destruction of evil-doers (*vināśāya cha dushkṛtām*) and for the establishment of righteousness (*dharma samsthāpanārthāya*) I am born from age to age (*sambhavāmi yuge yuge*)".<sup>3</sup> Further, "Though unborn (*aja*) and immortal (*avyaya*) and also the lord of all beings (*bhūtānāmīśvaraḥ*), I manifest (*sambhavāmi*) Myself through My own Māyā (*ātmamāyayā*) keeping my Prakṛti under control"<sup>4</sup>. The various Purāṇas and the Epics echo these ideas at various places. To quote only the *Bhāgavata P.* (X. 14.20): "O Birthless Lord of All, Thy births among the gods, ṛshis, men, animals and ocean forms, are all intended for one purpose of punishing the wicked and fostering the good".

The *Gītā* uses another term *vibhūti* to convey an idea somewhat similar to *avatāra*. Sri Aurobindo differentiates between the conceptions of *vibhūti* and *avatāra*. He compares the *Gītā* conception of *vibhūti* with European conception of superman. According to him the supermen or *vibhūtis* are 'above morality, and ordinarily without conscience, acting according to their own nature'. Aurobindo considers Rāvaṇa to be a *vibhūti* comparable to Napoleon. On the other hand, *avatāras* are 'representative cosmic men who have been divine instruments for establishing certain essential elements in the process of terrestrial historical

<sup>1</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>*Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, trans. by F.E. Pargiter, 1969, p. 518.

<sup>3</sup>*Gītā*, IV.7-8.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, IV. 6.



evolution. They open the way for humanity to a higher consciousness. The avatāras are not bound to do extraordinary actions, but they give their actions a meaning and import.<sup>1</sup>

### *Divine Spirit vis-a-vis Its Avatāra*

The doctrine of avatāra tacitly assumes the superiority of the original Divine Spirit or Over-Soul (in the case of Vaishnavism of Vishṇu, in the case of Buddhism of the Ādi Buddha or the Dharma-kāya of the Buddha and in the case of Śāktism, of the Supreme Mother Principle) over the incarnated deity. Bhagavan Das explains this relationship thus: when a mosquito stings a man, his vitality or life-force becomes concentrated in hands which at once try to brush-off the mosquito. Similarly when there is lawlessness in a section of society, the forces of lawfulness (government, public opinion, or group-soul) make concerted efforts to counteract it. The principle of collective counteraction against evil by the whole life-force of an individual or society may be called Divine-Spirit at the cosmic level.<sup>2</sup> It is given various names in different religions and sects. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* states: "This Mahān—Buddhi, the Principle of Universal Intelligence, Cosmic Consciousness which exists in all beings and in which all things exist, which is therefore known as *saṁ-vit*—this Principle has many names Manas, Mati, Brahma, Puh, Khyāti, Īśvara, Prajñā, Chit, Smṛti, Vipura, etc."<sup>3</sup> In the *Bhāgavata P.* it is called "the seed-store, the Principle, in the Nature of Self, from which all avatāras come" (*Sarveshām avatārānām nidhānam bījamavyayam*).<sup>4</sup>

### *Kalāvatāras, Amśāvatāras and Prati-Avatāras*

Thus according to the avatāra doctrine the great incarnations are the manifestations of the Over-Soul which puts forth its powers of good and devotion to high ideals. But apart from them minor

<sup>1</sup>Varma, V.P., *Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, Bombay, 1924, p. 421 f. Cf. Nikam, N.A., 'Avatāra: The Descent of the Divine,' *Aryan Path*, XXXVII, No. 11, 1966, pp. 499-502.

<sup>2</sup>Bhagavan Das, *op. cit.*, p. 10 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

manifestations of the Divine called *aṁśāvatāras* or *kalāvatāras* also take place, sometimes to resolve a minor crisis and sometimes to help the main avatāra. For example, in the *Durgāsaptaśatī*, the Supreme Mother is helped by the various *aṁśāvatāras* though it is also said that all of them were really her manifestations. In the *Rāmā*. Brahmā exhorts gods to beget sons with nymphs and demi-goddesses, who as monkeys and bears, will be the helpers of Rāma in his war against Rāvaṇa. Thus Hanumāna is said to have been the son of Vāyu, Bāli of Indra, Sugrīva of Sūrya, etc. In the *Mbh.*, on the other hand, all the heroes are declared to be the partial incarnations of gods, demi-gods, saints and demons—Bhīma of Vāyu, Arjuna of Indra, Karṇa of Sūrya, Yudhisṭhira of Dharma, Nakula and Sahadeva of Aśvins, Śiśupāla of Rāvaṇa, etc. In some cases conflicting traditions are recorded. Arjuna, for example, is usually said to have been the son of Indra. Therefore he is called Indra's avatāra in the *Harivaṁśa*. But in the *Mbh.* he is also described as the avatāra of Nara in his association with Kṛṣṇa, the avatāra of Nārāyaṇa. Similarly Balarāma and Lakshmaṇa are described at some places as the incarnations of Viṣṇu and elsewhere of the snake-god Śeṣha.

This confusion has been the result of the belief that usually avatāras and anti-avatāras come in groups, companies or *vyūhas* of associates, friends and enemies. The Epics and the Purāṇas describe the previous births and deeds of many of their main characters and the role they played in the world-drama. Thus it is said that Rāma, devotedly served by his younger brother Lakshmaṇa, became Kṛṣṇa and his former *anuja* Lakshmaṇa became his elder brother Balarāma. The two other brothers of Rāma, namely Bharata and Śatrughna, were born as Pradyumna and Aniruddha, respectively the son and grandson of Kṛṣṇa. In such a view it was natural to believe that Rāvaṇa, who in a previous birth had appeared as Hiranyakaśipu to be killed by the Nṛsimha avatāra of Viṣṇu, was born as Śiśupāla to be killed by Kṛṣṇa.

The doctrine of the avatāras of gods and demons together may appear strange but only till we recall that in the epic-Paurāṇika legends Devas and Daityas are all regarded as cousins (sons of Aditi and Diti sisters) or even 'step brothers'. According to another tradition just as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa were the avatāras of Viṣṇu so Rāvaṇa, Kaṁsa, etc. were the avatāras of Viṣṇu's

*pārshadas* (angel-attendants) who had fallen into evil ways. Philosophically also the *Bhāgavata P.* (III. 2.15) declares that both good and evil are forms of one life.<sup>1</sup>

### *Importance of Avatāravāda*

The doctrine of avatāra has influenced the history of Indian religion and thought tremendously. From the emotional point of view it has always been comfortable for an ordinary Indian to believe that when *adharma* will increase, God would come down to earth to set things right. This belief has become deep-rooted in Indian psychology. From the historical point of view the doctrine has been greatly helpful in bringing about a unity in diversity in religious thought. Because of this doctrine different sects worshipping numerous animal deities (such as *kūrma*, *varāha*, *matsya*, etc.) as well as deified human heroes (such as *Rāma*, *Vāsudeva*, *Paraśurāma*, etc.) could be brought under the umbrella of one great ideology, in this case Vaishṇavism. The doctrine played a similar role in other Hindu sects. For example, in Śāktism it made it possible to believe that the various goddesses are the manifestations of the same Supreme Mother Principle.

According to some scholars the concept of the non-human avatāras—the Fish, Boar, Man-Lion, Dwarf, etc. represents Paurāṇika allegories of the stages of psycho-physical evolution—equatic, reptilian, mammalian, lion, anthropoid and human.<sup>2</sup> But it is nothing more than the desire to trace modern concepts in ancient texts. However, the avatāra doctrine, connected as it is with the theory of *yugas* and *manvantaras* may profitably be analysed to understand the ancient Hindu view of history.

In modern times many persons pose or are made to pose as avatāras by their admirers or followers which is a gross misuse of a great doctrine. Sometimes when a local saint of a popular shrine is worshipped for a long time, legends grow which declare him an avatāra of some god or ṛshi. But most Hindus do not believe that great men like Śaṅkarāchārya, Nanak, Shivaji or Gandhi are born again as avatāras in times of crisis.

<sup>1</sup>Bhagavan Das, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8f.

In popular tales a hero or heroine is sometimes described as an avatāra of a minor god, gandharva, vidyādhara, etc. temporarily born as a human being because of a curse of some higher god. It is no more than a popular use of this doctrine as a literary motif.



## Chapter 4

# Bhakti and Pauranika Rituals

### *Antiquity of Sectarianism*

The epic-Paurāṇika religion is characterised by the existence of a number of theistic sects, the votaries of which worship a particular divinity as the Supreme God or Goddess. Thus for the Vaiṣṇavas Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity and for the Śaivas Śiva is the Greatest God. The personal approach of their worshippers is marked by intense devotion for (*bhakti*) and absolute surrender to (*prapatti*) their object of worship (*ishṭa devatā*). It is believed that sectarian theism made its appearance in the post-Upanishadic period, though some scholars trace its existence in some comparatively later 'ancient' or 'Vedic' Upanishads. D.C. Sircar has however very plausibly suggested that "sectarianism of some sort was the characteristic of the religious life of India even before the advent the Aryans some of whom had gradually adopted it before the latest hymns of the *Rgveda* were composed."<sup>1</sup> According to him the concept of *bhakti* explained as exceptional attachment, "may be regarded as an un-Aryan concept gradually adopted by the mixed Aryo-Nonary-an population of the country because the religious life of the *Rgvedic* Aryans is known to have been primarily dominated by the sacrificial cult having a different basis and approach".<sup>2</sup> In this connection Sircar has drawn attention of scholars to the following facts :

(1) The kneeling human figures with hands uplifted in prayer on the either side of a god usually regarded as Proto-Śiva on two Mohenjodaro seals may suggest the existence of a kind of sectarian devotees of the proto-type of Rudra-Śiva in the Indus Valley Civilization. (2) The Āpri hymns of the *RV* refer to the goddess Bhārati, regarded as the personified divine protective power of the

<sup>1</sup>Sircar, D.C., 'Antiquity of the Bhakti Cult', *The Bhakti Cult and Ancient Indian Geography (BCAIG)*, Calcutta, 1970, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 36.

Bharata people. It means that goddess Bhārati was at first exclusively worshipped by the Bharatas and was their tutelary deity, the concept of which is analogous to that of a sectarian divinity. (3) The name Bhārati reminds us of those of Kauśikī and Kātyāyanī which Banerjea explains as the aspects of the Mother Goddess originally worshipped by the sages of the Kuśika and Kātya gotras.<sup>1</sup> (4) The germs of Vaishṇavism as a sectarian religion are traceable in the *RV* since of the three *padas* of Vishṇu the highest is described in this work as known to Himself and visible only to Sūris (*Tad-Vishṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ divīva chakshurātataṁ*)<sup>2</sup> who must have been the persons favoured by God Vishṇu and remind us of the name Sūri applied to the sectarian devotees of Vishṇu in the later work like the *Padma Tantra*. The Rgvedic poets also pray that they may go, after death, to the blessed abode of Vishṇu which is the highest station beyond ordinary mortal ken. It reminds one of the later Vaishṇava conception of Vishṇuloka as the supreme goal of spiritual aspiration.<sup>3</sup> Though Banerjea has expressed doubts about this interpretation,<sup>4</sup> yet when all the points raised by D.C. Sircar are taken into consideration, latter's supposition that some sort of sectarianism existed in the pre-Upanishadic, nay even in the pre-Vedic age, seems to be quite valid. (5) In a couple of stanzas of the *RV* (I.156.2-3) the poets refer to the recitation or singing (*bravat* or *vivaktana*) of respectively the birth and names of Vishṇu,<sup>5</sup> while another stanza (VII. 100.5) alludes to the praising of Vishṇu's name. It suggests that a mythology around the birth of Vishṇu was already developing and his devotees recited his name which reminds one of the later practice of *nāma-japa* or *nāma-saṅkīrtana* of the god. (6) The later works often refer to list of *śāta-nāma* or *sahasra-nāma* of Vishṇu and Kṛṣṇa. That such lists existed in the age of the later Saṁhitās is clearly proved by the Śatarudrīya section of the *YV* and expression *sahasra-nāman* occurring in the *AV*. The Śatarudrīya of *YV*, containing a hundred names of Rudra shows that a section of his

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>*RV*, I.22.20.

<sup>3</sup>*AIU*, p. 431, and n.

<sup>4</sup>*PTR*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>The words *bravat* and *vivaktana* have been interpreted by Sāyaṇa as 'saṅkīrtana' or 'recitation'.

devotees attached great importance to the recitation of their god's name. It is quite likely that the Munis in the Keśī sūkta of the *RV*, whose description reminds us of the later day Pāśupatas, sang the *Śatarudrīya* incorporated in the *YV*. (7) The existence of Rudra as some sort of a sectarian god is noticed in the *Śvetāśvatara Upa.* which describes him as Maheśvara (Great God) among gods (īśvaras), and as the one who created the god Brahmā and presented the Vedas to the latter (VI. 7-8).<sup>1</sup>

### *Meaning and Origin of Bhakti : Bhakti in the Early Vedic Age*

Perhaps the greatest single characteristics which differentiates the Vedic from the epic-Paurāṇika religion is the great importance attached to and the part played by bhakti in the latter. The bhakti movement is generally regarded a medieval phenomenon, but as the means of spiritual life bhakti had acquired considerable importance in the Paurāṇika age and had become one of the important features of the post-Vedic religious thought. As we will see its germs have been traced even in the Vedic and pre-Vedic religious tradition.

In literature bhakti is regarded as one of the nine *rasas*. Śaṇḍilya defines bhakti as *sa parānuraktirīśvare*.<sup>2</sup> Svapaneśvara explains it as 'a particular state of mind having the Supreme Lord as its object'.<sup>3</sup> The *Gītā* also employs the word *prīti* and the *Vishṇu P.* the word *anurāga* for the same idea.<sup>4</sup> It implies a code of conduct and mode of worship (*āchāra* and *pūjā*). The three main senses of the root *bhaj* from which the word 'bhakti' has been derived (resorting to, serving and sharing)<sup>5</sup> correspond to the three stages of the development of

<sup>1</sup>Susmita Pande (*Birth of Bhakti in Indian Religions and Art*, pp. 11-12) closely follows the arguments of D.C. Sircar enumerated above.

<sup>2</sup>*Athāto bhaktijijñāsā. Sā parānuraktirīśvare. 1.1.1-2.*

<sup>3</sup>Kane, P.V., *HD*, V, ii, p. 958, n. 1152a.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>According to Grierson *bhakti* has primary meaning of 'adoration'. Both-lingk and Roth give the following different meanings of its root *bhaj*: (1) to distribute, apportion; (2) to equip, furnish, go (3) to receive, maintain, etc. According to Monier-Williams the meanings of the root *bhaj* are to enjoy, partake of, to pursue, to choose, to serve, to adore, etc. Suvira Jaiswal (*The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, Delhi, 1967, p. 37 f.) gives a materialistic interpretation of bhakti. She opines that the terms *bhagavat*, *bhakti* and *bhakta* are intrinsically related with each other and that *bhagavat* originally denoted

(Contd.)



bhakti, respectively implying the notion of a personal relationship between god and man, a mode of worship and the sharing by devotee in the *līlā* of god.<sup>1</sup>

As noticed above, according to D.C. Sircar bhakti was an un-Aryan concept gradually adopted by the mixed Aryo-non-Aryan population of the country. It could not have been a prominent feature of the Vedic religion because the religion of the Ṛgvedic Aryans was dominated by the cult of sacrifice. However, without negating this hypothesis he has also drawn attention to the possibility that some sort of devotional sectarianism existed in the Early and Middle Vedic periods (*supra*). Many other scholars including P.V. Kane and V.S. Agrawala have accepted this possibility.<sup>2</sup>

The word 'bhakti' is found in a mantra of the *RV* (VIII.27.11) in which bhakti to the Viśvadeva gods is mentioned : *Idā vāmasya bhaktaye*. Here the seer has possibly used the word *bhaktaye* in the sense of theistic devotion. According to the A.C. Chakravarti, the fact that *RV* knew the existence of some sort of bhakti is proved by the use of the terms *bhakta* (devotee) and *abhakta* (non-devotee) in *RV* I. 127.5. The word *bhajāmahe* (that is 'we worship') occurs in the Viṣṇusūkta (I.156.3) probably in devotional sense.<sup>3</sup> According to a number of modern scholars also the emotion of bhakti was known in the Vedic age. Hopkins has opined that bhakti is already evident in the *Ṛgveda*.<sup>4</sup> Radhakrishnan also feels

primitive tribal group which owned all tribal wealth, *bhakti* meant a share thereof, and *bhakta* an individual who had received such a share. In course of time *bhagavat* came to be regarded as a god, and *bhakta*, who was a member of the tribe, came to be looked upon as belonging to him and as his devotee. Such subjective interpretations, which go against known facts and the entire tradition of the country and seek to prove the correctness of a particular historical point of view with the help of unproved assumptions, need no comments. For the semantic development of the root *bhaj* see Bhattacharya, Suddhibhushan, 'Linguistic Background of the Word Bhakti', in *BCAIG*, p. 67-73. Cf. also *ERE*, 2, p. 539; Hiriyanā, M., *Popular Essays on Indian Philosophy*, p. 96; Ramanujam, B.V., 'Evolution of the Concept of Bhakti', *BCAIG*, p. 74 ff.; Vyas, R.N., *The Bhāgavata Bhakti Cult*, Delhi, 1977, Ch. 1.

<sup>1</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, *HD*, V, ii p. 950 ff.; Agrawala, V.S., 'Bhakti Cult in Ancient India', *BCAIG*, p. 11 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Chakravarti, A.C., 'Bhakti Cult', *BCAIG*, pp. 49-66.

<sup>4</sup>Hopkins, E.W., *Ethics of India*, p. 8.



that "if bhakti means faith in a personal god, love for him, dedication of everything to his service and the attainment of mokṣa or freedom by personal devotion, surely we have all these elements in Varuṇa worship."<sup>1</sup> Elaborating this idea, Susmita Pande, a recent writer on the subject, states that nearly all the elements necessary for bhakti may be gleaned from the Vedas. "The presence of elements such as the sense of wonder, justice, grace and helpfulness in the gods, the correlation of grace and faith, repentance, confession, forgiveness of sin, the sense of communion with the deity and his omnipresence and immanence, have surprised scholars who regard the Vedic religion as essentially polytheistic and animistic in character and have led others like Macnicol admit that it is not necessary to suppose that bhakti which is essentially associated with a theistic faith always follows an independent line of development of its own, or that it arose in entire independence from the Vedas."<sup>2</sup> According to Munshi Ram Sharma<sup>3</sup> also all the six constituents of *prapatti* enumerated in the *Ahīrbudhnya saṁhitā* and the *Lakṣmītantra saṁhitā* namely, to do what is correct (*anukūlasya saṁkalpaḥ*) avoiding sin (*pratikūlasya varjanam*), having faith that Lord will help (*rakṣishyatītiśvāsaḥ*) and protect (*gopitvavaraṇam*), complete surrender to God (*ātmanikshepa*) and humility (*kārpanya*) are found in the Vedic hymns.<sup>4</sup>

Though the Vedic literature is traditionally interpreted in terms of karmakāṇḍa and jñānakāṇḍa<sup>5</sup> yet, as pointed out by Kane,<sup>6</sup> Ṛgvedic gods were also conceived as having personal relationship with the worshipper which took various forms—that of a parent, friend, saviour, Lord, and even wife. In the *RV* we find all types of prayers which show devotion—prayers of petition, prayers of

<sup>1</sup>*Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Sharma, Munshi Ram, *Bhakti kā Vikāsa* (in Hindi), Varanasi, 1958, pp. 149-54; cf. also Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 10; Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 18; De, S.K., *BSOS*, VI, p. 668; Mrinal Dasgupta, *IHQ*, VI, pp. 319, 326.

<sup>4</sup>M.R. Sharma (*op. cit.*, p. 150 ff.) has given detailed references to the Vedic hymns in which these elements are found. He has traced many other sentiments such as *mānamarśaṇa*, *bhayadarśana*, *bhartsanā*, *pāpasmarāṇa*, *paśchātāpa*, *tanmayatā* etc. associated with bhakti in the *RV* (*ibid.*, pp. 154-63).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Śaṅkara's Preface to his *śikā* on the *Gītā*.

<sup>6</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 952.

glorification, prayers of silence.<sup>1</sup> Some of the Ṛgvedic mantras are full of loving faith in God, particularly some of those addressed to Varuṇa and Indra. According to *RV* I.103.4 Indra is a name that is to be chanted aloud. "All my thoughts (or hymns) praise Indra in unison, seeking light, longing for him,.....they (thoughts) embrace him (Indra), the divine giver of gifts"; "your friendship (with your devotee) is indestructible (everlasting); to him who desires a cow, you become a cow, to him who longs for a horse, may you be a horse." "O Indra, you are far better (or richer) than my father or my brother."<sup>2</sup> Indra is even said to have assumed the form of a wife for the sake of a devotee. Some mantras addressed to Varuṇa also show the same kind of *bhaktibhāva*. It is also remarkable that in the *Ṛgveda* there is a verse (*RV*, VI. 51.8) in which there is an apotheosis of 'namas' (*namaskāra*, adoration or homage) which is described as upholding the heaven and the earth.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Bhakti and Prapatti in the Middle and Later Vedic Age*

The post Ṛgvedic period was dominated by increasing ritualism as a result of which gods tended to lose their splendour and power and became tools in the hands of the priests<sup>4</sup>. But this development also helped in the rise of Viṣṇu and Rudra (Rudra being comparatively free of the ritualistic religion). Further, it created a reaction among the masses and liberated the human mind from externality, conventions and primitive anthropomorphism. This development also increased the tendency towards metaphysical speculation, strengthened monotheism and prepared the ground for the emergence of clearer concepts of personal god and devotion. As we have discussed in the first volume of the present work, a progress from polytheism to monotheism is seen in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* where in answer to the repeated questions of Viśvāmitra regarding the number of gods Yājñavalkya gradually reduces the number of gods from three thousand and three to one.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 10 f.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 950.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 952.

<sup>4</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 74 ff. According to M.R. Sharma many elements of bhakti are found even in the Brāhmaṇas (*op. cit.*, pp. 195-219). In the *AV* (VI.79.3) we find the epithet *bhaktivānśah* for those who were devoted to the cult of bhakti (Agrawala, *BCAIG* p. 11).

<sup>5</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 121.

However it is in the *Śvetāsvatara Upa.* that the concept of personal god becomes prominent. This Upanishad advocates the doctrine of a true unity. For it Rudra is the one Supreme God and there is no place for the second (*Eko hi Rudro na dvitīyāya*). He is the source and origin of gods, the ruler of all, and the creator of the golden germ (*hiranyagarbha*).

Though the term 'bhakti' is not found in the earliest principal Upanishads,<sup>1</sup> yet the doctrine that it is God's grace alone that saves the devotee is found in the *Kaṭha* and *Muṇḍaka Upanishads*, which declare that the Supreme Soul is attained not by expositions (of a teacher) nor by intelligence, nor by much learning; He is attained by him alone whom the Supreme Soul favours, to whom the Supreme Soul discloses His form."<sup>2</sup> In the *Praśna Upa.* Pippalāda recommends the practice of austerity, chastity and faith. In the *Kena Upa.* Vāyu, Agni and Indra obtain knowledge through the grace of Umā.<sup>3</sup> One may also detect the devotional impulse in the heart of Nārada when in the *Chhāndogya* he implores Sanatkumāra to initiate him into spiritual wisdom. The Upanishadic concept of *Upāsanā* is nothing but one-pointed devotion of thought towards a particular object and implies that the person who contemplates has supreme adoration and fondness for the object he contemplates.<sup>4</sup> That is why in the *Kena* Brahman is called the object of all desires, and the various Upanishads describe Him as the source of bliss and happiness. R.G. Bhandarkar also thinks that the origin of the bhakti doctrine may be traced to the Upanishadic idea of *Upāsanā* which magnifies what is meditated upon and represents it in glorious form in order to excite admiration and love. He also draws attention to the *Bṛhadāranyaka* passage which conceives the Ātman as dearer than the son, wealth and everything.<sup>5</sup> The result of the Upanishadic *Upāsanā* is not

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Vyas, R.N., *The Bhāgavata Bhakti Cult*, p. 27 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Kaṭha*, 2.22.; *Muṇḍaka*, III.2.3.

<sup>3</sup>M.R. Sharma traces the various other elements of bhakti in different Upanishads (*op. cit.*, pp. 220-32).

<sup>4</sup>According to Hiriyanna in so far as *Upāsanā* includes *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *dhyāna*, it may be said to contain the germs of later day bhakti (*Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, p. 26). Radhakrishnan (*Ind. Phil.*, I. p. 525) also affirms that bhakti is a direct development of the *upāsanā* of the Upanishads.

<sup>5</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *Collected Works*, IV, p. 39.



cold knowledge but mystical realization of the Absolute which is full of bliss, love and happiness involving a fair degree of devotion. As Macnicol<sup>1</sup> admits, the difference between the devotional theism of the Upanishads and the passionate theism of Bhāgavatism is the difference of degree only. Even the advaitist interpretation of the Upanishads does not negate bhakti because according to Śaṅkara Brahman is the impersonal aspect of God and God is the personal aspect of Brahman.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest unmistakable reference to bhakti as a cult occurs in the *Śvetāśvatara Upa.* where *devabhakti* and *gurubhakti* are mentioned together (VI. 23). Here the word bhakti is used in the same sense in which it is used in the *Gītā*. "These matters declared (here)", it states, "reveal themselves to that high-souled person who has the highest faith (*bhakti*) in God, and the same faith in his guru as in God". It advocates the doctrine of bhakti in IV. 18 also: "I, desirous of moksha, surrender (*prapadye*) myself as my refuge (*śaraṇam*) to that God who in former times created Brahmā, who transmitted to him (Brahmā) the Vedas and who illuminates the intellect of the individual soul."

According to P.V. Kane<sup>3</sup> the word '*prapadye*' used in the *Śvetāśvatara* served as the basis of the doctrine of *prapatti* in the later Vaishṇavite bhakti system. *Prapatti* (absolute self-surrender to God) is distinguished from bhakti in the works of the Rāmānuja and of other Vaishṇava schools but the *Gītā* makes no such distinction explicitly. In *Gītā* II.7 Arjuna uses the word *prapanna* (who has surrendered himself for salvation) for himself. The final advice at the end of the *Gītā* (XVIII. 65-66) enjoins what is called *prapatti* in later works: "On me fix your mind, become my devotee, sacrifice to me, offer adoration to me; you will certainly reach me; I declare to you truly, you are dear to me. Giving up all duties (*dharma*s) come to me as your (only) refuge; I shall release you from all sins; do not grieve".<sup>4</sup> The theory of bhakti propounded in the *Gītā* and other works is that bhakti leads to grace of God (*prasāda*) which enables the bhakta to attain salvation (*moksha*). In the *Vishṇu P.* Prahlāda is told by God: "as

<sup>1</sup>Macnicol, *op. cit.*, p. 49 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Aiyer, M.K. Venkataram, 'Bhakti from the Advaitic Standpoint,' *Vedānta Kasarī*, LII, No. 11, 1966, pp. 477-83.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 952.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. also *Gītā*, IX.34.



your mind is firmly (*nischalam*) and devotedly (*bhaktisamanvitam*) fixed on me you will by my favour (*matprasadena*) attain the highest bliss (*nirvānam*)”.

### *Evidence of Pāṇini*

According to most scholars the earliest known use of the term *bhakti* as theistic devotion is found in Yāska and Pāṇini. Yāska uses the words *Indrabhaktini* and *Angibhaktini* for the *bhakti* of Indra and Agni. According to Pāṇini the name ending *datta* (as in *Varuṇadatta*) denoted a benediction from a god (VI. 2.148) of which the personal name becomes a symbolic expression.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars find an early reference to the *bhakti* doctrine in the rule of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (fifth century B.C.) for the formation of the words ‘Vāsudevaka’ and ‘Ārjunaka’ respectively in the senses of ‘a person whose object of *bhakti* is Vāsudeva<sup>2</sup> and a person whose object of *bhakti* is Arjuna’. As Vāsudeva was undoubtedly regarded as the supreme god in the days of the *Gītā* and the Besnagar inscription (second century B.C.), Raychaudhuri may be right in his contention that the word *bhakti*, in regard to Vāsudeva is used in the above sūtra by Pāṇini in the sense of religious adoration, though the word is also used in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* with reference to cakes, and according to some the possibility of its meaning being ‘fondness’ cannot altogether be precluded.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Chakravarti, A.C., ‘Bhakti Cult’, *BCAIG*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Kaiyaṣa describes Vāsudeva as *Paramātmā-devatā Viśeṣa*.

<sup>3</sup>U.C. Bhattacharjee (*IHQ*, I, 1925, pp. 483-99) does not believe that the Pāṇini sūtra IV.3.98 (*Vāsudev-Ārjunābhyām vuñ*) refers to the *bhakti* of Vāsudeva and Arjuna. Allan Dahlquist follows him (*MIR*, p. 23 ff.). But the objections raised by Bhattacharjee are adequately met by P. Bannerjee (*JBR&S*, XL, 1954, pp. 74-79) and J.N. Banerjea (*Religion in Art and Archaeology*, p. 3 and n. 1). The heading of sūtra IV.3.98 is found in IV.3.95. It reads *Bhaktiḥ* and applies to all the sūtras from IV.3.96 to 100 which refer to things like cakes and milk-products in 96, Mahārāja in 97, all the Kshatriya and Gotra names like Nakula in 99 and all the countries and Kshatriyas in 100. Therefore, Bhattacharjee argues, here the term *bhakti* only means *anurakti* or ‘a preference for’ and not ‘devotion’ (cf. also Sircar, *AIU*, p. 432, n. 2). But if Vāsudeva and Arjuna were only Kshatriya heroes, the sūtra IV.3.99 would also have served their purpose. As later explained by Patañjali, separate sūtra for them was formed because they were also the Divine Ones (*tatrabhavataḥ*). Grierson Raychaudhuri and Bhandarkar accept this interpretation. The placing of the

(Contd.)

reference to two groups of persons as *Vāsudeva-bhakta* and *Kaṁsa-bhakta* in the *Mahābhāṣya* also is not regarded by some as quite clear. However, the idea of religious adoration for a leader of thought was not unknown in the days of Aśoka (middle of third century B.C.). It is indicated by the Rummindei pillar inscription, according to which the Buddhist king went in person to and offered worship at the birth place of Buddha, styled as *Bhagavat*. Attention may also be drawn in this connection to the installation of the Buddha's relics for worship mentioned in the early Buddhist literature as well as in inscriptions belonging to the time of Aśoka and king Menander (middle of the 2nd century B.C.), to the implications of bhakti in the reference to religious adoration in the verses of the *Therīgāthā*, to the representation of some cult deities of the Brāhmaṇical pantheon on the pre-Christian coins of India, etc.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Emergence of Bhakti Cults*

According to V.S. Agrawala<sup>2</sup> the germs of the Bhakti seem to have found a fertile ground in the obscure religious cults known as *maha* or *vrata* mentioned in the ancient Jaina and Buddhist literature. In the *Nāyādharmakāhā* and *Rāyapasenīya sutta* a number of mahas such as Inda maha, Khanda maha, Jakkha maha, Giri-maha, Bhūta maha, Vessavaṇa maha, Nāga maha, Chetiya maha, Rukkha maha, Sāgara maha, Siva maha, etc. are mentioned. Such deities of the Bhakti cult are also found mentioned in the *Niddesa* commentary of the *Sutta Nipāta* and the *Milindapañho*. The *Niddesa* passage refers not only to Vāsudeva, Baladeva, and the Ājīvakas,

name of Vāsudeva before Arjuna in the *dvandva* compound *Vāsudev-Ārjuna* shows that Vāsudeva was a more honoured deity than Arjuna. The *Mbh.* (V. 49.19) preserves a tradition that Arjuna was the incarnation of an ancient deity Nara, as Vāsudeva was of Nārāyaṇa (cf. Banerjea, *Purāṇic and Tāntric Religion*, p. 22). Barth also believed in the prevalence of Arjuna worship (*The Religions of India*, London, 1881, p. 172, n. 2). The word 'Vāsudevaka' may be compared with the word 'Gotamaka', 'a follower of Gautama' (Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 145). Patañjali alludes to the *Vārttika* on Pāṇini sūtra IV.2 104 and names the followers of Akrūra and Vāsudeva. While commenting on the sūtra *alpācḥ taram* (II.2 34) he refers to the temples of Rāma (Saṅkarshaṇa) and Keśava (Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva).

<sup>1</sup>In the *Milindapañho* we have mention of *Vāsudevavratika* which seems to be the same as 'Vāsudevaka' of Pāṇini.

<sup>2</sup>Agrawala, V.S., 'Bhakti Cult in Ancient India', *BCAIG*, pp. 11-23; see also his *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Lokadharmā*.

Nigaṇṭhas, Jaṭilas, etc., but also the followers of Nāgas, Supaṇṇas, Yakkhas, Agni, Maṇibhadda, Puṇṇabhadda, Asuras, Gandhabbas, Mahārājas,<sup>1</sup> Chanda, Sūrīya, Inda, Brahmā, Deva, cows, dogs, crows etc. As remarked by J.N. Banerjea<sup>2</sup> this is a curious assortment by a follower of Buddhism in which believers in Ājīvikism, Jainism and Vāsudeva worship are grouped with the devotees of crows, dogs, etc.

### *Bhakti in the Epics*

The doctrine of bhakti is found in considerably developed form in the two Epics. It is generally believed that the Bālakāṇḍa and Uttarakāṇḍa, which treat Rāma as divine, an avatāra of Viṣṇu, and preach his bhakti, were later interpolations in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but seeds of avatāravāda and Rāma bhakti may be found in the other Kāṇḍas also. In the beginning of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa (I.7) Rāma is considered as an avatāra, though Bulcke regards the first thirty-five verses of the first chapter of this Kāṇḍa as interpolated. In the incident of Śabarī Rāma's divinity becomes quite explicit. It is said that Śabarī went to akṣaya-loka by his *prasāda*. In the Sundarakāṇḍa, Hanumāna gives hints of the semi-divine character of Rāma. In the Yuddhakāṇḍa Sugrīva tells Vibhīṣaṇa that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are seated on Garuḍa. At the time of the *agniparikṣhā* of Sītā, gods pray to Rāma and describe him as the very form of Viṣṇu and identify Sītā with Lakṣmī. Rāma is considered as Rudra, Nārāyaṇa and Parabrahma. As regards bhakti, the word is used in the *Rāmā* in sense of loyalty towards elders, husband, etc. also. In the Sundarakāṇḍa Hanumāna's bhakti for Rāma becomes quite clear. Thus Rāma's avatārahood and his bhakti were known to the authors of the original *Rāmā*, unless all these portions are regarded as interpolated. In the Bālakāṇḍa and the Uttarakāṇḍa both these elements develop further. In the chapter on Putreshtī sacrifice of Daśaratha Brahmā suggests that Viṣṇu take the form of a mortal (Rāma) to kill Rāvana. In the Uttarakāṇḍa Rāma is described as an avatāra in several chapters viz. 8, 17, 27,

<sup>1</sup>All the four Lokapālas including Vaiśravaṇa are called Mahārāja in early Buddhist literature, but not usually in the Brāhmaṇa literature. Pāṇini also states that Mahārāja was a *devatā* to whom oblations were offered. According to Patañjali *bali* offered to Mahārāja was called *mahārāja bali*.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *PTR*, p. 11.



30, 51, 76, 98, 104, 106, 111, 137 etc.<sup>1</sup> Sītā is also usually described as of mysterious origin, an *ayonijā*. When she enters the earth and Rāma becomes angry on the latter, Brahmā asks Rāma not to forget that he is Viṣṇu and Sītā is Lakshmī. The character of Hanumāna as an ideal bhakta also develops in this Kāṇḍa.

The *Mbh.* contributes to the development of bhakti in three ways: by its narratives of the deeds of Kṛṣṇa, through the *Gītā* which contains the gospel of bhakti and through some other sections especially the Nārāyaṇīya, which give expression to the ideas and sentiments of bhakti.<sup>2</sup> As we will discuss in the chapter on Bhāgavatism, the character of Kṛṣṇa in the *Mbh.* is multi-dimensional—he is a politician, a philosopher, an ascetic, a king, a man with known parentage and yet regarded as unborn, a mortal who is immortal, all rolled into one. He is worshipped as incarnation of Viṣṇu. He and Arjuna are described as Nara and Nārāyaṇa. In the Aranyaparvan Kṛṣṇa is described as a great ascetic who performed austerities on the Gandamādana mountain. He is said to have been Viṣṇu and Trivikrama. According to V.S. Agrawala some of these descriptions show a Pāñcharātra influence.<sup>3</sup> His bhakti is clearly preached at a number of places. When Draupadī is divested of her robes in the Kaurava court, and on another occasion faces the prospect of a curse of angry Durvāsā, she prays to Hari as an *ārta bhakta*.

#### *Bhakti in the Nārāyaṇīya Section*

The most important of the *Mbh.* portions on bhakti are the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Śantiparvan and the *Bhagavadgītā*. In the Nārāyaṇīya section Nārada goes to Nara and Nārāyaṇa and asks them whom they worship. They tell him that they worship the Paramātmā from whom everything has originated. On their advise Nārada goes to the Śvetadvīpa where he comes to know about the devotees who were fair-complexioned, wore white garments and took only that food which was free of violence. They were engrossed in *mānasa japa*, were aware of *ekānta bhāva*, remained celibate, worshipped Nārāyaṇa and created the *Tantra śāstra*. Then Nārada learnt the story of Vasu Uparichara's

<sup>1</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* p. 42 f.

<sup>3</sup>Agrawala, V.S., *Bhārata Sāvitrī*, p. 181.



sacrifice in which Bṛhaspati could not have the vision of God as his mind was given to violence, and Ekata, Dvita and Trita, the sons of Brahmā, and other sages could not realize Him because they practised self-mortificatory penances. Vasu Uparichara was the only one to realize Him because he practised neither violence and nor bodily penances, but devoted himself to *ekāntika bhakti*. When Nārada returned to Nārāyaṇa, the latter found that *ekāntika bhakti* had germinated in the former. Nārada then had a vision of Viśvarūpa of God—almost a replica of the Viśvarūpa described in the *Gītā*.

### *Bhakti in the Gītā*

In the *Gītā* the Upanishadic ascent towards God is matched by the descent of God, that is His incarnation, among men (see Ch. 3). He assumes a form and humanity, though He is unborn, infinite and the transcendent Lord of all creatures. With this humanization of God bhakti comes into its own within a personal relationship between man and God<sup>1</sup>. That is why it is the human form (*mānusham rūpam*) which Arjuna prefers to the cosmic form (*viśva-mūrti*)<sup>2</sup>. In the seventh chapter of the *Gītā* Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa declares that there is only one God Vāsudeva in the universe; other devatās are only His forms. He further says that whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, He makes that form steady. But the *Gītā* is "categorical in affirming that the worship of the personal God is superior to the contemplation of the impersonal absolute"<sup>3</sup>.

However, there is a great difference between the *Gītā* and the Nārāyaṇīya section. In the former, though the Supreme Soul is called Vāsudeva (VII. 19) the doctrine of the four vyūhas, which is the characteristic feature of the Nārāyaṇīya section, is totally absent. The names of Saṅkarshaṇa, Pradyumna and Airuddha do not occur in the *Gītā*; even the name of Nārāyaṇa does not occur in it. In the opinion of Kane the *Gītā* is the older of the two, as it propounds the general doctrine of bhakti, while the Pāñcha rātra doctrine of the Nārāyaṇīya is only one of the several bhakti

<sup>1</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

schools.<sup>1</sup> Besides, as we have seen, the worship of Vāsudeva is older than Pāṇini, for Pāṇini teaches the formation of the word 'Vāsudevaka' meaning one whose object of worship is Vāsudeva'. We will discuss this problem in greater detail in the chapter on Bhāgavatism (Ch. 7).

Three mārgas (paths) are spoken of in the *Gītā* viz. karma-mārga, bhaktimārga and jñānamārga. In the path of knowledge (or *avyaktopasanā*) it is not bare book knowledge of Nirguṇa Brahman as the Supreme Soul that leads to salvation. For that purpose what is required is the Brāhmīsthiti (state of identifying one self with Brahman). This condition can be secured only with great effort. In the path of bhakti the bhakta resigns himself to God's grace (*prasāda*) and whatever he does he consigns to Vāsudeva (*sangūṇa* and *vyakta*). In Chapter 9 the path of bhakti is described as the chief among *vidyās* (lores) and chief among mysteries. It is the best means of sanctification; it can be directly apprehended; it is in accordance with dharma, imperishable. According to the *Gītā*, the bhakti mārga is easier than the jñāna mārga.<sup>2</sup>

In the seventh Chapter Kṛṣṇa classifies bhaktas into four categories namely *ārta* (in distress), *jijñāsu* (seakers of knowledge), *arthārathī* (seakers of worldly riches) and *jñānī* (men of wisdom), and explicitly favours the jñānī bhakta who is ever in constant union with the Divine and whose devotion is single-minded. He is *ekabhakta*; for him only Vāsudeva is everywhere.<sup>3</sup> In Chapter IX bhaktas are divided into two categories—sakāma and nishkāma. Sakāma bhaktas attain heaven but come down to earth after their merits are exhausted, while the nishkāma bhaktas attain what they have not viz. the Lord's form. For them faith must be unwavering (*avyabhichārīṇī*) and total (*ananya*).

The ancient Indians had a great liking for classifications, divisions and sub-divisions. In the *Padma P.* bhakti is divided into *laukikī* (of the common people), *vaidikī* (laid down by the Vedas) and *ādhyātmikī* (philosophical) (V. 15.164), or as *mānasī* (mental) *vāchikī* (verbal) and *kāyikī* (done with the body, such as fasts and vratas) (V. 15. 165-168). In the *Bhāgavata* it is classified into *sāttvikī rājasī* and *tāmasī* (III. 29. 7-10) and into *uttamā* (best) *madhyamā* (middling) and *kanishṭhā* (inferior) (III.34. 38-41).

<sup>1</sup>Kane, *HD*, V,ii, p. 962.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 965.

<sup>3</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 60.

According to the *Bhāgavata P.* however bhakti is nine-fold viz. *śravaṇa* (hearing about Viṣṇu) *kīrtana* (repeating his name), *smaraṇa* (remembering him), *pādasevana* (worshipping the feet of the image of Viṣṇu), *archana* (offering pūjā), *vandana* (bowing or paying homage) *dāsya* (treating oneself as the slave of Viṣṇu), *sakhyā* (treating Him as a friend) and *ātmanivedana* (surrendering one's soul to Him). According to Nārada's *Bhaktisūtra* bhakti is eleven-fold – *guṇamāhātmayāsakti*, *rūpāsakti*, *pūjāsakti*, *smarāṇāsakti*, *dāsyāsakti*, *vatsālyāsakti*, *kāntāsakti*, *ātmanivedanāsakti*, *tanmayātāsakti*, *parama virhāsakti* and *sakhyāsakti*. It is not to be supposed that all these nine or eleven methods have to be practised at the same time. According to *Śāṇḍilyasūtra* a devotee practising any one of these may win God's favour and attain moksha. The *Viṣṇu P.* says that remembering Kṛṣṇa is superior to all *prāyaścittas*. The *Gītā* does not expressly enumerate all these nine or eleven modes of bhakti, but most of them can be gathered from its various passages.<sup>1</sup> For example, Arjuna's bhakti is 'sakhyā-bhakti'. The *Gītā* however regards the performance of the duties of his station in life by a bhakta as the best form of worship (*archana* or *pūjā*), far superior to the worship by offering flowers or by reciting the name of God.

Here we may recapitulate the main aspects of the doctrine of bhakti of the *Gītā* discussed in the preceding pages. From our discussion it is obvious that bhakti in the *Gītā* is distinguished by (i) a sharp focus on Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa as the God *parexcellence*; (ii) an emphasis on the doctrine of incarnation of the Deity for the protection of dharma and destruction of adharma; (iii) the theory of casting all actions on Vāsudeva by the devotee; (iv) a belief in the

<sup>1</sup>For example, listening to the Lord's names is mentioned in XII.25; to the singing of his glory, that is *kīrtana* in IX.4; constant remembrance, that is *smaraṇa* in X.9; *pādasevana* in XI.44; *pūjā* and *archana* in IX.26; *vandana* in XI.36-46; *sakhyābhāva* in XI.41 and *ātmanivedana* in IX.32 and XVIII.56, 62, 66, etc. According to A.L. Basham (*The Wonder that was India*, p. 330), the divine grace in the *Gītā* is "The condescension of a mighty potentate, stern and functional" and his glory is "the glory of an emperor" which an ordinary human being can hardly think of. Suvira Jaiswal (*The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 113) thinks that the *Gītā* sought to emphasize the relationship of master and slave between the Deity and the devotee because after the break up of tribal solidarity the society was being reorganised on the basis of varṇa dharma for the success of which a religion based on faith and devotion was required.



efficacy of the simple acts of devotion ; (v) universality of the doctrine as the gospel of salvation irrespective of the distinctions of caste, creed and even gravity of one's sins; (vi) possibility of a direct vision of God by the devotee; (vii) variety of relationship between God and devotees—father and son, friend and friend, lover and beloved, etc. ; (ix) doctrine of *śaraṇāgati* by the devotee, matched by (x) the promise of redemption by the Lord.

Here it is significant to note that the *Gītā* does not explicitly refer to image worship, for *Gītā* IX. 26 may be regarded as referring to religious symbols and not images. It also does not refer to the role of guru. In the later ages both these features became prominent in the bhakti sects. Many features of the bhakti of the *Gītā* mentioned above also underwent significant changes. For example, the worship of other gods and goddesses became more important than it is indicated in the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇabhakti itself underwent tremendous changes. The doctrine of avatāra was elaborated both in terms of the number of avatāras and in terms of motivation—now it was emphasized that God incarnates himself not only for the impersonal restoration of dharma, but also to fulfil the needs of individual devotees. With the passage of time bhakti ceased to be a simple affair, so much so that Śrīdhara mentions eightyone forms of minor bhakti from which one graduates to the higher one. The lover-beloved relationship of God and the devotee was also carried far beyond, and made much more erotic, than the author of the *Gītā* could probably imagine.<sup>1</sup>

### *Bhakti in the Pāñcharātra System*

The doctrine of bhakti was developed by the followers of the Pāñcharātra system also. We will discuss the problems connected with the origin, development, philosophy, literature, etc. of the Pāñcharātra system in Chapter 6. Here it is sufficient to say that the first clear reference to Pāñcharātra is found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XIII.6.1) which says that Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa conceived the idea of the pāñcharātrasattra for obtaining supremacy over all beings and becoming all beings. In another

<sup>1</sup>Sharma, Arvind, 'The Bhagavadgītā and Later Bhaktic Developments,' *Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopinātha Kavirāja Commemoration Volume*, Allahabad, 1976, pp. 53-61.



chapter of this text (XII.3.4) it is described how by sacrifice Nārāyaṇa became the whole world. Later on, Nārāyaṇa was identified with Viṣṇu and Vāsudeva and their identity became an important doctrine of Vaiṣṇavism. Their identification is first found mentioned in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (X.1). By the time the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* was composed the Pāñcharātra had become a devotional system for, as we have noted above, in this work Nārada meets Nara and Nārāyaṇa and goes to the Śvetadvīpa where he sees white people who worshipped Nārāyaṇa, created the *Tantrasāstra* and were engrossed in *ekāntika bhakti* and *mānasa japa*.

An important aspect of the Pāñcharātra system is the doctrine that there are five-fold manifestations of the Lord—*para* (highest form), *vyūha*, *vibhava* (avatāras or incarnations), *archā* (images, in which He condescends to live to help his devotees in devotion) and *antaryāmī* (Lord's manifestation in the hearts of the people). The *vyūha* theory arose out of the deification of the several Vṛṣṇi heroes (*vīras*). Like avatāras the *vyūhas* also act as spiritual guides and are, therefore, also objects of devotion. The doctrines of grace and *prapatti*, and the theory that initiation through a teacher (guru) is a prerequisite for grace play an important part in the Pāñcharātra devotion.<sup>1</sup> According to the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (14. 34-41) as soon as the Lord's grace descends on the devotee he becomes eligible for moksha. The *Lakṣmī Tantra* (17.49, 59) says that there are four ways to attain moksha—*karman*, *sāṁkhya*, *yoga* and *śaraṇāgati*. The last, that is the path of self-surrender, also called *nyāsa*, is generally regarded as the best of all. The *Gītā* (XVIII. 62, 66; II.7) also advocates it. The *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* ((37.31) explains it as the prayer by the devotee to the Lord that he is abode of all sins, that he is without any help and that he depends only on Him for moksha. As noted above, it describes (37.27-29) six form of *śaraṇāgati*—*anukūlasya saṁkalpaḥ* (to do what is correct, that is to follow His ways), *pratikūlasya varjanam* (avoiding sin, that avoidance of things opposed to Him), *rakṣishyatīti viśvāśaḥ* (having faith that the Lord will protect) *gopīṭva varaṇam* (acceptance of Him as saviour), *ātmanikshepaḥ* (surrendering oneself

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed discussion vide S.R. Bhatt, *The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra—An Advaitic Approach*, Delhi, pp. 100-2.

to Him) and *kārpanyam* (a sense of utter humility).<sup>1</sup> According to Rāmānuja *śaraṇāgati* implies *svarūpa-samarpaṇa* (an unflinching conviction that the one belongs to the Lord), *phala-samarpaṇa* (an unflinching dedication of fruits of one's deeds to Him), and *bhāra-samarpaṇa* (transfer to the Lord of one's own responsibility in the matters of spiritual progress).<sup>2</sup>

### *Bhakti in the Purāṇas*

Tracing a strictly historical evolution of the bhakti doctrine within the Purāṇas is an impossible task, because even in the earliest Purāṇas quite later additions are found, while in the Purāṇas which are generally regarded as late, some early material is not altogether wanting (*supra*, p. 32). We have already discussed the Paurāṇika literature and its chronology. However some additional words may here be added about the *Bhāgavata*, which is the most important of the Purāṇas from the point of view of bhakti. Its composition has been variously placed prior to sixth century A.D. (B.N. Krishnamurty Sharma),<sup>3</sup> between 550-650 A.D. (A.N. Ray),<sup>4</sup> in the sixth century A.D. (V.S. Agrawala),<sup>5</sup> 'not before the ninth century' (Durga Shankar Sastri)<sup>6</sup> and in the tenth century (C.V. Vaidya).<sup>7</sup> Whether or not it was composed in the Draviḍa country as Banerjea, C.V. Vaidya and A.N. Ray believe,<sup>8</sup> is also a debatable question. The theory of its southern origin finds some support from the tradition recorded both in the *Bhāgavata* and the *Padmā* according to which the cult of bhakti first arose in Draviḍa country, prospered in Karnataka, was found at only a few places in Maharashtra and declined in the Gurjara country.<sup>9</sup> On account of

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 97 f.

<sup>2</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup>Sharma, B.N. Krishnamurty, 'The Date of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa', *AB & RI*, XIV, pp. 182-218.

<sup>4</sup>Ray, A.N., *JRAS*, II, 3.

<sup>5</sup>Agrawala, V.S., quoted by S. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>6</sup>Sastri, D.S., *Bhāratiya Vidyā*, II, pp. 129-39.

<sup>7</sup>Vaidya, C.V., 'The Date of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa', *JBBRAS*, I, pp. 144-58; cf. also R.C. Hazra, in *NIA*, I, pp. 522-28; Banerjea, J.N., 'Śrīmad-Bhāgavat—the Place of its Origin', *IHQ*, XXVI, ii, 1951, pp. 138-43.

<sup>8</sup>Banerjea, *op. cit.*; Ray, A.N., 'Domicile of the Author of the Bhāgavat Purāṇa', *IHQ*, VIII, i, 1932, pp. 49-53; contra, S. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 979.

the terrible conditions, in the Kaliyuga it was broken up by heresies and remained weak for a long time, but when it reached Vṛndāvana (near Mathurā) it got a fresh start and assumed fine form. In its book XI, the *Bhāgavata* again assert that in the Kali age people are solely devoted to Nārāyaṇa only at a few places, but to the greatest extent in the Draviḍa country.

In the Purāṇas the *ālambana* or object of bhakti are fully personal and anthropomorphic gods, and their incarnations in various forms. In their worship use of images and temples is common, emphasis is given on *japa*, *dhyāna*, *tīrthayātrās*, *dāna*, etc. and the recitation (*pāṭha*) and hearing (*śravaṇa*) of the sacred books is regarded as an act of devotion. Madhusudana Sarasvatī in his *Bhāgavadbhaktirasāyanam* states that while bhakti arises from hearing the Lord's qualities, Brahma vidyā arise from listening to the Vedāntika Mahāvākyas. Thousands of aśvamedhas and hundreds of vājapaya sacrifices, it is said, are not equal to even the 16th part of the story narrated by Śuka; he who always recites a half or a quarter verse of the *Bhāgavata* secures the merit of rājasūya and aśvamedha; he who listens to the *Bhāgavata* at the time of death, Govinda being pleased with him confers on him Vaikuṇṭha.<sup>1</sup> Ajāmila a moral wreck, at the time of his death loudly called his youngest son named Nārāyaṇa and became free from his sins.<sup>2</sup> Such stories gave rise to the belief that the last thought at one's death leads to a new birth appropriate to that thought (*ante matiḥ sā gatiḥ*).<sup>3</sup> *Gītā* VIII. 5-6 also suggests the same idea and states that a person will remember the name of God at the time of his death only if he had been so doing all his life.

(The most remarkable aspect of bhakti is the concept of personal relationship between the deity and devotee. In the Purāṇas miraculous element becomes quite prominent in this relationship (as the story of Prahlāda as narrated in the *Vishṇu* and the *Bhāgavata*). *Vishṇu* and *Śiva* are usually said to go out of their way to protect their bhaktas. When pleased by a devotee, they grant him desired boons. In the *Bhāgavata* Kṛṣṇa is also shown granting boons, but receiving his love from him is stressed more.

<sup>1</sup>*Padma P.*, VI. 189-194. It contains a lengthy eulogy of the *Bhāgavata P.* and of listening to its recitation for seven days (*Saptaha*).

<sup>2</sup>*Bhāgavata P.*, VI.2.49.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, *HD*, V, ii, p. 972.

The true bhaktas have His heart in their hands. Even the Chāṇḍālas receive his grace if they are true devotees. Usually Hari, Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa is described as more easily moved by his devotees than Śiva and other gods.

In their zeal for the spread of the cult of bhakti the Purāṇas are sometimes guilty of gross exaggeration.<sup>1</sup> The *Brahma P.* claims that 'men even after having committed many sins under the influence of error (or delusion), do not go to Hell, if they worship Hari who removes all sins'. The *Vāmana P.* opines: "what has that person got to do with many mantras (i.e. he has no use for them), who is a bhakta of Viṣṇu. The mantra '*namo Nārāyaṇāya*' is able to accomplish all objects'. The *Vāmana* and the *Padma Purāṇas* say that one obtains the same results by repeating the names of Viṣṇu that he could secure by visiting all the tīrthas (sacred places) and holy shrines in the world.

The goal to be attained by a devotee is the realization of Paramātmā by his single-minded devotion (*ananya* or *ekāntika bhakti*). A true devotee does not care for material gains. The boon Prahlāda asked for was that in all the births he might pass his faith in Achyuta remains unshaken. Dhruva was not satisfied even when he got all the worldly pleasures. In the Purāṇas devotees are shown as craving to serve the Lord, seeking His company either as His servant or friend or both at a time—that is with *dāsya*, *sakhya* or *mīśrita bhāva*. Sometimes the devotee expresses himself as jealous even of Lakshmī because she serves the lord constantly. In *pālya-pālaka bhāva* the devotees conceive the lord as child and themselves as mother (*vātsalya rati*). The lord is also regarded as a lover—the gopīs of the *Bhāgavata* being its best example. He is also sometimes conceived as father, or a teacher, or a saviour.

A striking development of the bhakti cult in later ages was erotic mysticism (*madhurā bhakti*) associated with the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in that form of Vaishṇavism which was established by Chaitanya and Vallabhāchārya. It resulted in the emergence of an erotic mysticism about Rāma and Sītā also. The devotees of this cult consider themselves as brides of Rāma or the female friends of Sītā (*sakhī bhāva*). They are supposed to seek

<sup>1</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 971.



Lord Rāma's favour through Sītā, who graciously intercedes with the Lord for the devotees. Among the followers of Vallabhāchārya the guru tells the devotee to look upon him (that is the guru) as Kṛṣṇa and upon himself or herself as Rādhikā.

### *Bhakti in Buddhism*

Theistic religions naturally provide a fertile soil for the growth of bhakti. But it was nourished in heterodox faiths as well, which are generally regarded as atheistic. In the original Buddhism, which was rational in approach, regarded the Buddha as a superman only and subscribed to the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), it was not possible to conceive a creator *Īśvara*. Nevertheless early Buddhism has a notion of a superhuman saviour with compassion (*karuṇā*) for the suffering mankind (which to some extent corresponds to the doctrine of *prasāda* or grace) and therefore conceded the importance of faith (*saddhā*) as a spiritual faculty. Consequently we find in Buddhism the full gamut of emotions and attitudes involved in bhakti — *anusmṛti*, *śaraṇāgati*, *bhagavānpūja*, *nāmasmarāṇa*, etc.<sup>1</sup>; According to Hardayal the ideal of bhakti is called *saddhā* in the Pali Nikāyas.<sup>2</sup> In the Hīnayāna the physical relics of the Buddha were worshipped because, as *Milindapañho* argues, they are like a fan by which wind may be summoned artificially even though a great wind has blown itself out (i.e. the Buddha has entered Nirvāṇa).<sup>3</sup> Later, some of the Hīnayāna sects showed a tendency to lift the Buddha, even during his human life, into wholly transcendental sphere. Such docetic tendencies were fully developed in Mahāyāna in which belief in the deified Buddha, *Trikāyavāda* and the bodhisattva doctrine became cardinal principles. We have discussed the rise of devotionism and such other developments in Mahāyāna Buddhism in detail in the first volume of the present work.<sup>4</sup> Here we only intend to recapitulate some tendencies to make this discussion on bhakti more complete.

In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* the human existence of Gautama is but an illusion produced by him for the purposes of converting

<sup>1</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Hardayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine*, London, 1932, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 320 ff.

human beings. Herman Von-Glasenapp<sup>1</sup> believes that the Buddha of the *Saddharmapundarika* cannot be fully compared with the gods of theistic religions because firstly Śākyamuni is not said to have been the world-liberator from beginning but attained this office in time and secondly his activities are limited ; he has no influence over creation, rule or continuation of the universe. He is not the father of the world but of the further Buddhas only. However, as Susmita Pande<sup>2</sup> argues, even though the Buddha of the *Saddharmapundarika* does not have all the features of a theistic God, yet he reaches quite near this goal, for his concept evokes in his followers all the emotions connected with a highly developed stage of bhakti. He performs miracles and proclaims a very personal relationship with the devotees. Even the bodhisattvas have the same type of relationship with the laymen. Devotion to them is expressed by erecting stūpas, making their images and worshipping them by offering flowers, perfumes, etc. with or without the accompaniment of music. It is claimed that even by offering a single flower can a person in course of time see koṭis of Buddhas which reminds one of the declarations of the Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* that whosoever offers Him with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, He appears in person before that devotee.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Bodhicharyāvatāra* of Śāntideva a bodhisattva must perform *pūjā* and *vandanā* (worship and obeisance) with flowers, fruits, jewels, etc.), *śaraṇāgamana* (taking refuge, *prapatti*), *pāpa-deśanā* (confession of sin), *puṇyānumodana* (rejoicing in God), *adhyeśanā* (prayer), *yāchanā* (supplication), *pariṇāmanā* and *ātm-abhāvādi parityāga* (declaration of altruism and self-denial) before he can entertain the thought of Enlightenment.<sup>4</sup> The doctrine reached its culmination in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* according to which salvation can be attained through absolute faith.<sup>5</sup>

### ✓ Bhakti in Jainism

Like early Buddhism, early Jainism was also a religion of self-reliance and self-effort. Jaina religious aspirant had also to work

<sup>1</sup>Herman Von-Glasenapp, *Buddhism—a Non-Theistic Religion*, London, 1970, p. 76f.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>*Gītā*, IX.26.

<sup>4</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 78 f.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

his way up by penance and austerities to free himself from the worldly bondage of karman. As in Buddhism, there was no place in Jainism also for a creator god.<sup>1</sup> But later on the element of bhakti was introduced in Jainism also and devotional rituals were prescribed for the worship of Jinas who were now extolled as gods, ever merciful and ever intent upon saving the three worlds by their infinite grace. The Jainas also raised Yakshas and Yakshīs or Yakshiṇīs, the attendants of the Jinas, to the status of semi-gods and goddesses. They are called the śāsanadevatās whose function is to protect the holy doctrine. In course of time Yakshiṇīs became full-fledged goddesses.<sup>2</sup> The different types of devotion recognised in Jainism are *stutivandana*, *pratimā-pujana*, *nāma-smaraṇa*, *bhajana-kīrtana*, *vinaya*, *vaiyāvṛtṭya*, etc.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Contribution of the Ālvārs and Nāyanārs*

Till about the fifth century A.D., harmony and tolerance characterised the relations between the different religious sects of South India. But thereafter a great change came particularly in the Tamil region—and people began to entertain fears of the whole land being converted to Jainism and Buddhism. Consequently missionary parties of the devotees of Viṣṇu and Śiva under the leadership of gifted saints called the Ālvārs (Vaishṇava) and Nāyanārs (Śaiva) began to traverse the country singing, dancing and debating all their way. This great wave of religious enthusiasm attained its peak in the middle of the seventh century and had not spent itself by the middle of the ninth.<sup>4</sup>

The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang, who visited South India in 642 A.D., when the Hindu devotional revivalism was just gathering momentum, did not notice the new movement. He regrets that

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, *RHAI*, I, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 180 f.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'The Concept of Devotion in Jainism', *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, III, 1965, pp. 80-92.

<sup>4</sup>Sastri, N.K., *A History of South India (HSI)*, Oxford, 1966, p. 423. D.C. Sircar (*Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India*, 1971, pp. 55-70; *CHI*, IV, p. 143 ff.) places Ālvārs roughly between the sixth and ninth centuries. He seems to be correct, for the first three Ālvārs, cannot be placed earlier than the Gupta age and all the Ālvārs appear to have flourished before Nāthamuni (10th or 11th cent. A.D.).



Buddhism was on the decline, but remarks repeatedly that it had yielded to Digambara Jainism. It seems that the triumph of Hindu revivalism was largely achieved in the two centuries that followed him. Public disputations usually led kings and rulers to transfer their allegiance from one creed to another, but more significant was the impact of the soul-stirring compositions of the Nāyanārs and the Ālvārs and the fact that these were set to simple popular tunes.

The Vaishṇava wing of the movement was represented by twelve Ālvārs<sup>1</sup> ('divers' into the qualities of God), usually called 'the morning stars of the medieval bhakti movement,' for whom orthodox tradition gives an impossible chronology (4203-2706 B.C.). Their bhakti was certainly more intense than the bhakti advocated in the *Gītā*. Three of them—Poygai, Pūdam or Bhūtam and Pey are believed to have come earliest. The bhakti of these early saints is gentle simple devotion, altogether free from sectarian outlook. This fact, and their employment of the *veṇbā* metre in their songs, points to an early date for them.

The Ālvārs had before them a tradition of the Upanishads, the *Gītā*, the Pāñcharātra Āgamas and the Purāṇas. They synthesized all these. But they were not only speculative mystics, but had personal experience of what they themselves wrote. They were drawn from all walks of life and carried to the people a message of intense personal religion of the love of god.<sup>2</sup>

After the early Ālvārs came Tirumaḷisai, born in Chingleput district. Most probably he was an elder contemporary of Pallava Mahendravarman I. It is said that at birth he was a shapeless mass of flesh abandoned by his parents and was brought up by a Śūdra. He is said to have practised Jainism, Buddhism and Śaivism before he became a Vaishṇava. His poems show a more controversial tone than those of the first three Ālvārs, and this was quite natural in his age. He gives a more personal description of God and describes His *vibhavas* and *vyūhas*. According to him God runs after His devotees, and grants them grace if they adopt the path of *śaraṇāgati*.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sircar, D.C., 'Early History of Vaishṇavism', *CHI*, IV, p. 143 ff.; Murthy, H.V. Sreenivasa, 'Revival of Bhakti Movement in the Tamil Country by the Ālvārs', *BCAIG*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, pp. 82-7; Pande, S., *op. cit.*, Ch. 7; cf. also Menon, P.K.K. 'Bhakti Exponents in Kerala', *BCAIG*, p. 102 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 114.



After him we might place Tirumangai, who was a petty chieftain of Ālināḍu in the Tanjore district. According to legends he became a robber in order to carry off and marry the daughter of a Vaishṇava of higher caste. He even changed his religion for her. He is said to have stolen a solid golden image of the Buddha from a monastery in Negapatam to pay for renovating the temple of Śrīraṅgam.<sup>1</sup> The clear reference to Vairamegha (Dantidurga Rāshtrakūṭa) in his hymns place him in the middle of the eighth century.<sup>2</sup> His hymns, and they are many, are equally full of good poetry and attacks on Jainism and Buddhism. To Śaivism he shows a more friendly attitude. Also there are many resemblances in literary form and religious sentiments between Sambandar and Tirumangai.<sup>3</sup> He sings the greatness of God by describing many epic-Paurāṇika legends and expresses his longing for His grace passionately.

To the beginning of the ninth century is assigned Periyālvār, a Brāhmaṇa of Śrīvilliputtūr. He won a religious disputation in the court of the Pāṇḍya king Śrīmara Śrīvallabha (815-62). In his hymns he assumes the role of Kṛṣṇa's parents and associates showing (*vātsalya* and *sakhya bhāva*). Renunciation for him meant renunciation of everything except the service of god.

Āṇḍal or Kodai (Skt. Godā), was the real or adopted daughter of Periyālvār. In her intense devotion to Viṣṇu she dreamt of her marriage with him, and described her experience in her hymns. This mystical union was the only one she knew. Her devotion shows mādhyurya bhakti of the most intense form. In many ways the ardour of her devotion resembles that of the gopīs of the Bhāgavata. Her hymns make many allusions to Kṛṣṇa legends.

Tiruppāṇ, a minstrel of low caste, belonged to about the same period. He was not permitted to enter the temple of Śrīraṅgam and was thus the Vaishṇava counterpart of Nandan<sup>4</sup> (*infra*). About ten verses composed by him are extant.

Toṇḍar-aḍip-poḍi ("The dust of the feet of the devotees") was

<sup>1</sup>HSI, p. 426.

<sup>2</sup>D.C. Sircar thinks that he was a contemporary of Sambandar who himself was a contemporary of Narasiṃhavarman I (630-38 A.D.).

<sup>3</sup>HSI, p. 426.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 427.

a Brāhmaṇa from Tanjore district whose real name was Vipra-nārāyaṇa. His intolerance of Buddhism and Jainism was great. He sang the nature of God, His beauty and His grace.

Kulaśekhara was a ruler of Kerala. He was proficient in Sanskrit and Tamil both. Among other shrines of Viṣṇu he sang of that at Chidambaram.

Lastly came the celebrated Nammālvār and his pupil Madhura-kavi. The former renounced the world in his thirty-fifth year to practise yoga. His hymns, the largest in number after those of Tirumangai, are regarded as embodying the deepest religious experience and philosophic thought of one of the greatest seers of the world. His disciple Madhurakavi adored his guru as god incarnate.

Later traditaion contained in the *Periya Purāṇam* counts sixty-three Nāyanārs as the most prominent leaders of the Śaiva side of this revival. They laid a firm foundation of Tamil mysticism and made no distinction of caste, creed or sex in the cause of devotion. Their relation with the Śaiva Āgamas is somewhat similar to that of the Ālvārs with the Pāñcharatra Āgamas. They included a woman from Kāraikāl Ammaiyar and a Śūdra, Nandan, from Āḍanūr, besides a Pallava *senāpati* Śruttonḍar. But most prominent among them were the three great men whose hymns are collected together in the *Devāram* or *Tevāram* of Nambiandar Nambi. First came Tirunāvukkaraśu, or Appar, a Vellāla by caste who renounced Jainism to become a Śaiva. According to tradition he was a contemporary of Mahendravarman I Pallava and was subjected to many trials and tortures by the latter which he easily overcame by the grace of Śiva. Finally, the king himself was convinced of the superiority of Śaivism, and embraced it. A verse in a Trichinopoly inscription of Mahendravarman furnishes clear proof that this ruler did indeed turn to Śaivism from some other creed. It must, however, be admitted that the tradition regarding the persecution of Appar by Mahendravarman I is hard to reconcile with the spirit of the *Mattavilāsa prahasana* composed by the latter.<sup>1</sup> The rest of Appar's long life of 81 years was spent in tīrthāyatrās during which he met many other Nāyānārs of whom Nānasambandar was the most prominent.

<sup>1</sup>HSI, p. 424.

Nānasambandar was a Brāhmaṇa of the Kaunḍinya gotra from Shiyāli in the Tanjore district. At that time the Pāṇḍya country was almost completely Jaina. Nānasambandar betook himself to Madurā, foiled the conspiracies of the Jainas against him, defeated them in debate and converted the king and his subjects to Śaivism. He was the purest of all the saints, with no past to regret. He may be placed in the middle of the seventh century.

Some decades after Nānasambandar came Sundaramūrti of Nāvaḷūr. He was the son of a poor Brāhmaṇa parents. Sundara's devotion to Śiva was that of an intimate friend (*sakhya bhakti*) so that he was given the title Tambirān-Toḷan ('Friend of God').

About a century later came the famous Maṇikkavāṣagar. According to tradition he was a minister of a Pāṇḍyan king. Śiva, the presiding deity of Madurā, is said to have performed many miracles on account of him. Mystical writing reached its climax in his hymns.

The hymns of Sambandar, Appar and Sundara form a veritable treasure-house of religious experiences which "tells of mystical raptures and ecstasies, of moments of light when there is a vision of God and the world is transfigured in the light of his love, and of periods of gloom when all is dark and the blind seeker is filled with a sense of fear. Somewhat different and more exuberant are the outpourings of Maṇikkavāṣagar whose confessions are more outspoken and whose devotion is more impassioned".<sup>1</sup>

#### *Contribution of Śaṅkara to Bhakti*

An important, though less popular aspect of the Hindu revival is seen in the works of Kumārila and Śaṅkara. They were Smārtas who worked for not any one sect in particular but for the ancient Brāhmaṇical religion in general. As we have seen, Śaṅkara's philosophy of advaitism was mainly based on the Upanishads. As the doctrine of bhakti is connected with the theory of karman and worship, it was unlikely to receive serious attention from Śaṅkara. But the Gītā, the authority of which was accepted by him, forced him to define his position vis-a vis bhakti more specifically. In his commentary on the Brahmasūtra Śaṅkara seek to reconcile religion of worship and devotion with the religion of pure knowledge by

<sup>1</sup>Śastri, N.K., *op. cit.*, p. 425 f.



making a distinction between Nirguṇa Brahma and Saguṇa Brahma or Brahma and Īśvara. In the conditioned or *sopādhika* aspect Brahma is the same as Īśvara. This doctrine is combined by him with his interpretation of the four types of the bhaktas described in the *Gītā* (*supra*). He concludes that the last class of the bhaktas being that of the jñānīs, bhakti must be identical with jñāna. In so far as bhakti stands for the different modes of worship, sacrifice, cultivation of moral virtues etc., it is really identical with karman. The result of the *karmalakṣaṇā bhakti* is the purification of heart—*sattvaśuddhi* and it culminates in *śaraṇāgati*. It prepares the ground for *jñānalakṣaṇā bhakti* which is an intimate and immediate awareness of the Lord. *Jñānalakṣaṇā bhakti* is *sādhya bhakti*. It is only *sādhana bhakti* or *karmalakṣaṇā bhakti* that belongs to the realm of duality.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Contribution of Rāmānuja and other Vedāntins*

The work of the poet saints of the Pāṇḍya-Pallava period, was continued in the age of the Cholas by a succession of poets and teachers of second rank. "The Tamil hymns of the last age came to be treated as equal to the Veda and were collected and arranged in canonical books. Gradually they were regularly employed in the daily worship in temples, and their authors came to be regularly worshipped as manifestations of divinity. In fact the rise of the temple to an important place in the religious and social life of the land was the direct result of the revivalist movement".<sup>2</sup>

The Śaiva canon, in which these hymns also found a place, was arranged in the first instance in the reign of Chola king Rājarāja I and continuously added to till about the middle of the twelfth century. The Vaishṇava canon, on the other hand, was given definitive shape by Nāthamuni. His grandson Yāmunāchārya was the next great name in the succession of Vaishṇava āchāryas of the period. But the greatest of the Vaishṇava āchāryas was undoubtedly Rāmānuja. We have already given an outline of his life and philosophy. He was strongly attracted by the teachings of the Śrīraṅgam school of Yāmuna and succeeded the latter as head of

<sup>1</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 172; Venkatarma, Iyer M.K., 'Bhakti from the Advaitic Standpoint,' *Vedānta Kesarī*, LXI, No, 11, 1966, p. 477 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Sastri, *op. cit.*, p. 428 f,



the maṭha at Śrīraṅgam. In his lectures and writings he refuted the Māyāvāda of Śaṅkara and tried to demonstrate that the Upanishads do not teach strict monism, and built up the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita and interpreted his idea of bhakti in its light. He was eager to spread the doctrine of bhakti among Śūdras and even among the outcastes. He permitted them the privilege of entering certain important temple on one day in the year.<sup>1</sup>

According to Śaṅkara lower bhakti is identical with karman while higher bhakti is identical with jñāna. For Rāmānuja, on the other hand, both jñāna and karman prepare the way for bhakti. In the philosophy of Rāmānuja constant remembrance of God acquires the character of vision. God is the dearest object of man's devotion; hence jñāna must assume the form of bhakti (*bhaktirūpam jñāna*) and the fusion of the two must rest in the service of God.<sup>2</sup>

A younger contemporary of Rāmānuja was Nimbārka (*supra*), a scholarly Bhāgavata Telugu Brāhmaṇa. He spent most of his time in Vṇḍāvana in North India. In religion he accepted the doctrine of surrender (*prapatti*) and translated it into a total devotion to Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. For him Rādhā is the eternal consort of Kṛṣṇa who lives with him for ever in Goloka, the highest heaven.

The philosophic debate on bhakti ended in complete pluralism in the system of Madhva (*supra*). The centre of his religion is bhakti of Kṛṣṇa as taught in the *Bhāgavata*, Rādhā having no place in it. But he revered all avatāras. Śiva is also worshipped, and 'the five gods' (Pañcāyatana) are recognized.

### *The Pūjā Ritual*

A significant difference which took place in the orthodox religion due to the rise and growth of bhakti was the introduction of the pūjā of symbols and idols in and out of temples. According to most Paurāṇika sects no one can realize the Supreme Spirit without a concrete idea of the same, and hence it is necessary that He should be worshipped in the form of images or concrete symbols. The *Parama Saṁhitā* of the Pāñcharātras emphatically directs the religious aspirant to worship God only through idols (*archā*).<sup>3</sup> "He

<sup>1</sup>HSI, p. 430.

<sup>2</sup>Pande, S., *op. cit.*, p. 186 f.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Bhatt, S.R., *The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra*, p. 102 f.

is to be worshipped only in the visible form. Except in such a form worship ought not to be conducted." The worship or prayer offered to His image is regarded as good as worship or prayer offered to Him directly. Therefore a large portion of the literature related with the various Paurāṇika sects consist of ritual concerning image, worship, installing of images and the related subjects of iconography, temple architecture, etc.

There is a difference between the Vedic *yajña* and Paurāṇika *pūjā*. The mode of the two rituals is different, the oblations and priests are different. Animal sacrifice is still there, but the animals are not strangled to death as in Vedic times but slaughtered with a scimitar.<sup>1</sup> Gradually the tendency not to offer animals to the deity increases and it becomes merely symbolic. Instead of twelve or sixteen priests officiating in sacrifices, in *pūjā* we usually have only one, sometimes with one assistant or two.<sup>2</sup> Ordinarily there were sixteen *upachāras* (items of showing honour to the deity) in the procedure of *pūjā* (namely, *āvāhana*, *āsana*, *pādya*, *arghya*, *āchamana*, *snāna*, *vastra*, *yajñopavīta*, *anulepana* or *gandha*, *pushpa*, *dhūpa*, *dīpa*, *naivedya*, *tāmbūla*, *dakṣiṇā* and *pradakṣiṇā*). But some authorities increase their number to 36 or 38 or reduce it to 14, 12, 10 or 5, there being no unanimity on the question.<sup>3</sup>

It is generally supposed that the various *upachāras* associated with the *pūjā* ritual, particularly offering of *pushpa*, *gandha*, *dhūpa*, *dīpa* and *naivedya* were unknown in the Vedic religion and came into prominence at a very late stage as a result of the non-Aryan influence. As we noted earlier,<sup>4</sup> the word *pūjā* is usually derived from the Dravidian word *pū-cey* (meaning *pushpakarma*) as opposed to the Vedic *homa* which involved *paśukarma* (ritual with animals). Another derivation proposed for the word *pūjā* is from the Dravidian word *pūsu*, 'to smear'. This derivation suggests that it was a ritual in which sandal paste or vermilion, representing blood, was smeared upon the symbol or image. Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva gives his approval to the *pūjā* ritual in the *Gītā* (IX.26) when he says : "Whosoever with devotion offers me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, that I accept—the devout gift of the

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *The Indian Theogony*, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Kane, P.V., *HD*, V, i, pp. 34-7.

<sup>4</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 6.

pure minded". According to S.K. Chatterji<sup>1</sup> this verse gave official sanction, so to say, to a non-Vedic-non-Aryan ritual when Hindu society was being given its permanent shape by the leaders of the mixed society of the Aryans and non-Aryans. However P.V. Kane<sup>2</sup> disagrees with this view. According to him the underlying conception in the R̥gvedic passages, where gods are asked to accept *apūpa*, *puroḍāśa*, *dhāna*, milk, honey etc. is the same as that involved in the offering of *naivedya* to the image. He has also pointed out that the word *upachāra* in the sense of mode of showing honour is found in the *Śatapatha*, that the *Nighaṇṭu* uses the verb *pūjayati* in the sense of worship, that the sixteen *upachāras* were known before the age of the Gṛhyasūtras, that the *Nirukta* mentions the word *pūjayati* as occurring in the Vedas, that *namaskāra* was known in the Vedic age as an item of worship, and that the word *pūjā* had already taken a secondary meaning (honour without *gandha*, etc.) in the age of the Dharmasūtras. Kane does not agree also with the view that the word *pūjā* is to be derived from some Dravidian root; he feels that it could have been derived from the word *pushpa* itself.

#### *Symbol and Image Worship*

Before we proceed further with the mode of worship and social aspects of epic-Paurāṇika religion, let us discuss the question of the origin and antiquity of image worship in India and the allied question of the use of visual symbols. The use of symbols in any religion decidedly precedes the use of images, and continues even after the worship of images becomes popular. We shall therefore, first discuss the symbols regarded as sacred in the epic-Paurāṇika religion and then take up the problem of the antiquity of image worship.

#### *Philosophy of Symbol and Image Worship*

In the early Indian religions and art an extensive use was made of a large number of symbols and devices. It is difficult to definitely ascertain the origin of these symbols. However, there seems to be in many cases a striking resemblance between some symbols found on early indigenous art objects and coins and those appearing on the seals discovered at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and other sites of

<sup>1</sup>CHI, I, p. 82 f.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, HD, V, i, pp. 35-37.

the Indus Civilization. We have discussed in detail some of the symbols occurring on the Indus seals in the second chapter of the first volume of the present work. As regards the Vedic religion, although no art remains date from the Vedic period, "there can be no doubt that ideas, forms and symbols developed during this period and acted as seed and mould for the succeeding ages".<sup>1</sup> "The Vedic vision of reality was not mediated by mentally constructed or artificial images. The notion of form or *rūpa* was there".<sup>2</sup> But "although Vedic poets use images from nature as transparent expression of divine majesty and splendour, they do not conceive gods iconically... they however do use forms as symbols in what cannot be seen. *Rūpa* is, thus, often used for a symol in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In the *Upaniṣads*, however, we can see a tendency which Buddhism carried further. Words and forms, *Nāman* and *Rūpa* are run down as merely the limitation under which manifestation takes place.....all representations contain the working of imagination.....The deceiving nature of imagination, however, has a redeeming feature. There is such a thing as a useful deception, *avisamvādibrahma*. The image may not represent reality but it..... may help in the course of successful action".<sup>3</sup> The map is not the reality it represents, but it is useful for the navigator. The symbol or image "seeks to realize an imponderable idea which serves as a standard of excellence or perfection".<sup>4</sup> The Buddha did not think much of his physical body. His followers, however, developed a veritable religion of the worship of symbols such as the Bodhi tree, the Vajrāsana, his foot-prints, the stūpa, etc. and later on, of the worship of his images. It has been argued that stūpa shows a cosmic symbolism. Other symbols adopted by the Buddhists were also based on such assumed significance. In the first century A.D. emerged the worship of the Buddha image. The iconography of the Buddh image was based on the thirty-two *Mahāpurusha lakṣhaṇas* which were a part of the common Indian heritage about the Chakravarti. It is therefore never easy to discriminate between Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist and Jaina symbols.

<sup>1</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 324 f.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 326.



It may however be noted that in India, iconism and aniconism existed side by side. The Buddha could be depicted by means of symbols as well as iconically, and by both at the same time, though in the earlier Buddhist art of Central India he is represented only aniconically. Similarly, Brāhmaṇical cult deities could be worshipped iconically as well as in the form of the Śālagrāmas, the Bāṇa-līṅgas and the Yantras. But here the association of deities with the symbols was not so direct though attempts were often made to account for their connection by the fabrication of mythological stories. The legends connected with the various līṅgas and the well-known Śākta tradition about the severed limbs of Śakti falling in different parts of India as a result of which those places came to be regarded as so many Śakti *pīṭhas* may be noted in this connection. Sometimes such iconic objects were held in greater veneration than the images themselves.

### *Animal Symbols*

The history of animal symbols in Indian religions begins with the Indus Civilization.<sup>1</sup> In the earliest Vedic literature gods generally assume the form of animals. In the *RV* the Vedic goddesses like Ushā, Pṛthivī and Aditi are symbolised as cow. The horse, the main offering in sacrificial rites was anthropomorphised as Aśvins.<sup>2</sup> The symbol of most solar deities viz. Sūrya, Savitṛ, Vivasvat, Bhaga, Pūshan and others was also horse.<sup>3</sup> In Buddhism the horse is the symbol of renunciation.<sup>4</sup> The history of tiger as a religious motif also starts with the Indus Civilization. As regards lion, in the Maurya period, Aśokan pillars surmounted by lions were erected at places like Sanchi, Sarnath, Lauriya Nandangarh, etc. In the Paurāṇika religion lion became the mount of Durgā.

In the *RV* Rudra is described as a bull. Nandin, Nandiśvara or Adhikāranandin are some of the various names by which Śiva's mount, the 'bull', came to be described in the Epics and the Purāṇas. It has been suggested by J.N. Banerjea that the bull was

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *RHAI*, I, p. 296.

<sup>2</sup>Chattopadhyaya, B., *Coins and Icons, A Study of Myths and Symbols in Indian Numismatic Art*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Macdonald, A., *The Vedic Mythology*, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>Zimmer, H., *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, 1963, p. 162.

originally the theriomorphic form of Śiva.<sup>1</sup> The idea about the bull being the mount of the god appears to have originated before the first century B.C. or first century A.D.

In the Vedas the waters are called maternal (*Mātṛtamah*). In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* a fish saves Manu from Deluge. The representation of the fish in a tank on the Punch-marked coins probably signifies the cult of fertility involving the worship of water. Apart from fish crocodile, dolphin, tortoise and snake, who are born of water, are found to be connected with the various deities. Fish and snake stand for the phallus while other water-born animals are associated with the Yakshas, Yakshiṇīs, Kāmadeva, Varuṇa, Gaṅgā, etc. as their mount.

The earliest representation of *makara* (crocodile) is to be found on some seals at Mohenjodaro. Much later it is found on some Punch-marked coins and on the facade of the Lomaśaṣhi Cave of the Maurya period. In the words of E.W. Hopkins, "The only really divine water-animal in India is the crocodile".<sup>2</sup> Makara is obviously a symbol of waters, more specifically of the principle of life, and is the well-known *vāhana* of Varuṇa. In the *Mbh.* Kāmadeva, who is identified with Kṛṣṇa's son Pradyumna, is Makara-dhvaja and Mīnaketana. Kāmadeva is also a form of Agni, and Agni is born of the water. The ninth Jaina Tīrthaṅkara is also associated with makara. Makara has also been shown as the *vāhana* of the river goddess Gaṅgā, of the various Yakshas<sup>3</sup> and sometimes of Umā as well. On some coins of Samudragupta, a goddess is shown standing on a makara. Allan identified her with Gaṅgā.

In addition to makara the water-horse, water-elephant, water-bull and winged water-lion are found in association with Yakshas, etc.

The connection between water and snakes seems to have been a vital factor in the *Nāga-worship*. According to Vogel, "it would be difficult to quote another instance in which it takes such a prominent place, in literature, folk-lore and art, as it does in India. Nor would it be possible to name another country where the

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, Ch. IX.

<sup>2</sup>Hopkins, E.W., *Origin and Evolution of Religion*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>In Buddhism Māra (= Kāmadeva) is a Yaksha.

development of this cult can be studied during a period which may be estimated at no less than three millennia".<sup>1</sup> According to him the regular appearance of the snakes at the commencement of the rainy season may be considered as the reason for regarding the reptile as the symbol of the fertility. It is also generally assumed that the symbol of the entwined serpent-pair represents both male and female fertility principles.<sup>2</sup>

Vishṇu or Nārāyaṇa is associated with Śeṣha or Anantanāga, but occasionally he is found as hostile to the Nāgas who were probably originally a non-Aryan snake-worshipping tribe.<sup>3</sup> The hostility of Vishṇu against the Nāgas is indicated by the conquest of Kālīya by Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Vishṇu. Śiva-Paśupati represented on a seal at Mohenjodaro is shown as worshipped by the hooded cobras. That proves the antiquity of the concept of the Paurāṇika Śiva as Nāgeśa.

The association of the Nāgas with Jainism is reflected in the recognition given to the serpent-king as the protector of Pārśvanātha.

Among birds, *Garuḍa* is identified with the sun traversing the space and is held to be the arch enemy of the serpents. According to Jarl Charpentier the story of Kadru and Vinītā as given in the *Suparṇāḍhyāya* must have originally been an ancient animal saga in which the chief actors were the serpent and the eagle.<sup>4</sup> In Vaishṇavism *Garuḍa* is the vehicle of Vishṇu, and is very frequently shown as carrying the deity with or without Lakshmī. He is often depicted as half-bird and half-man. In the words of V.S. Agrawala, "Suparṇa, the Eagle which is the same as *Garuḍa* being the symbol of Sūrya, Time, Saṁvatsara, Agni and for the matter of that of each god associated with movement.....The *Garuḍa-Nāga* motif of art is an extension of the *Suparṇa* myth."<sup>5</sup> In the *Sātvata* list of the 39 incarnations of Vishṇu, *Garuḍa* appears as *Vihaṅgama* and *Amṛtaharaṇa*, the God's 9th and 18th *avatāras*, though the name *Amṛtaharaṇa* may also stand for Indra, for he stole the nectar from

<sup>1</sup>Vogel, Quoted in *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, by B.C. Sinha, Delhi, 1983, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Chattopadhyay, B., *Coins and Icons*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Chattopadhyay, B., *The Evolution of Theistic Sects in Ancient India*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Charpentier, J., Quoted in *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, p. 179.

<sup>5</sup>Agrawala, V.S., *Indian Art*, p. 51.



the Nāgas.<sup>1</sup> In the earliest period Garuḍa is represented as a huge parrot-like bird, or as bird-man. In the latter form he is usually found as the capital of a column or is placed in front of a Vaiṣṇava shrine.

The *peacock* is also considered as the sun-bird in Indian mythology and is described in the *Mbh.* as the eater of snakes. It came to be associated with Skanda-Kārttikeya. The symbol of *swan* or the goose is found to be associated with Brahmā, Varuṇa, Viṣṇu Kubera and goddess Sarasvatī. The *parrot* is held to be sacred to Kāmadeva. It is also a pet bird of Yakṣiṇīs. The *owl* which was supposed to be the messenger of death in the *R̥gveda* came to be recognised at a late period as the symbol of the goddess Lakshmī. The *crow* is also associated with one of the terrible forms of the Mother Goddess.<sup>2</sup>

### *Tree Symbols*

Tree worship is one of the oldest and most widely spread forms of worship. According to Hopkins probably the tree-world as a whole was an earlier object of worship than any individual tree.<sup>3</sup> In the symbolism of ancient nations the sacred tree sometimes figures as a type of the universe, and represents the whole system of created things, but more frequently as a tree of life.<sup>4</sup>

In India, definite evidence of tree worship is as old as the Indus Civilization.<sup>5</sup> Belief in the sacredness of some trees is also evidenced in the Vedic literature. The plant of *soma* occupied an important place among the Vedic deities. In the *RV* (X.135.1) it is under a tree that Yama drinks soma with the gods and ancestors. In the *AV* (V.4.3) we find reference to the *fig* tree under which the gods sit in the third heaven. In the *Chhāndogya* (VIII.5.3) and the *Kaushītaki* (1.3) *Upanishads* reference is made to the fig tree as well as the *Tree of Life*. In the Purāṇas we often find reference to Pārijāta, Kalpadruma and other celestial trees. In the Epics Chaityavṛkshas are mentioned as the resorts of the Devas,

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 529.

<sup>2</sup>Chatopadhyay, B., *Coins and Icons*, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Hopkins, *Origin and Evolution of Religion*, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Sinha, B.C., *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>Goyal, S.R., *RHAI*, I, p. 29.

Yakshas, Nāgas, Apsarās, Bhūtas, etc. Even today each village in India has some sacred tree. In Paurāṇika Hinduism *pīpal* is regarded as specially sacred. Its sanctity was recognised in Buddhism also. The *vaṭa* or *nyagrodha*, that is banyan, is the basis of much Paurāṇika symbolism. The *tulasī* plant is associated with Viṣṇu and is usually tended with great care even now in the courtyards of the Hindus.

The concept of Kalpavṛksha is also found in various sects. In the Purāṇas trees have often been identified with gods. In the *Padma Purāṇa*, *pīpal* is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, *baḍa* tree of Rudra and *palāśa* of Brahmā.<sup>1</sup> Numismatic data illustrates and proves the literary tradition.<sup>2</sup>

### *Solar Symbols*

Sun is regarded as a symbol of life. One great fountain of all idolatry in the world has been the veneration paid by men to the sun. In India it is honoured from ancient times. *Chakra* is the symbol of the Sun and also of time. It is identified with the supreme moral order in the form of Dharma-Chakra or Sudarśana Chakra. In the words of V.S. Agrawala, "The Cosmōs is known as Brahmāṇḍa-Chakra; the World order as Saṃsāra-Chakra; Human Life as Bhava-Chakra; the flux of men's action as Karma-Chakra; the Revolving Wheel of Time as Kāla-Chakra; the Moral order which governs the universal and the individual ordinances as Dharma-Chakra. The Chakra stands for the perfect cycle of life which is at once beautiful and accessible to all, and therefore called Sudarśana-Chakra, the wheel of the Divine Preserver of world and life, Bhagavān Viṣṇu. The Divine is Transcendent creator but His immanent presence becomes manifest as the dynamic Chakra or Revolving Wheel".<sup>3</sup>

The commonest of the symbols found on the Punch-marked coins is *chakra* or sun which occurs generally on the obverse with very few exceptions. Foucher finds in them so many forms of the

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*, p. 34 f. Tree-in-railling is one of the important numismatic devices. It is identified with *bodhi* tree by Spooner and with Chaityavṛkshas by Banerjea.

<sup>3</sup>Agrawala, V.S., *Chakra-dhvaja*, Preface.

Dharmachakra symbol. But according to Banerjea the suggestion that most of them stand for the sun is more acceptable.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the spoked wheel and its variants on some tribal coins may stand for the Sudarśana of Viṣṇu, and Vedic Viṣṇu was an aspect of the Sun god with whom Vāsudeva was identified.<sup>2</sup> The worship of the Chakra was a well-established cult known as Chakra-Maha. The Chakra is frequently repeated motif in the early Indian art at Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Amaravati and Mathura. At some places, it occurs as triśūla-chakra (wheel, topped by trident). In Jaina art, the motif of the Chakra-stambha framing a Tīrthaṅkara image together with an aṣṭamaṅgalaka mālā is represented on the Āyagaṇapattas. The Buddhist worship it as the Dharmachakra of the Buddha. In the sphere of polity the chakra personified the rule of a Chakravartī king. It is graphically represented on the Chakra-Vikrama coin of Chandragupta II showing the Gupta emperor as worshipping the Lord Chakrapurusha. The worship of potter's wheel during the marriage ceremony is a relic of Chakra worship. V.S. Agrawala rightly observes, "there is hardly any other cult of such universal hold as Chakra-worship".

*Svastika* is a solar symbol which indicates the four-armed pattern of the cosmos. Each chakra or solar symbol carries within its womb a svastika formed by combining four right angles of 90° each. It is one of the aṣṭamaṅgala marks recognised in all Indian religious sects. It is found even on some Mohenjodaro seals. *Cross* may be regarded as its simplified version. Later on svastika occurs on the Punch-marked coins and in the Maurya, Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and Gupta art.

### *Lunar Symbol*

Moon is also worshipped as a god since the Vedic age. Soma as moon was one of the popular deities in the early Vedic age. In Northern India Karavā-Chautha and Saṅkaṭa-Chaturthī are important occasions for the worship of the Moon even now. On the Karavā-Chautha day women worship the moon for the long life of their husbands, and on the Saṅkaṭa-Chaturthi day for children.

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

*Śivaliṅga, Śrīchakra and Śālagrāma*

Śiva has been represented in Indian art from the Indus Valley Civilization down to our own times both in liṅga and human forms. Both are deeply rooted in the religious tradition of India.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the Mother Goddess is represented in human form as well by Śrīchakras (ring-stones) found from Taxila to Pāṭaliputra. They are of hard-stone, with or without a hole in the centre and show the Mother Goddess in various forms and postures. At times there are only plural geometrical patterns. As noted by us elsewhere, the worship of ring-stones was known in the Indus Civilization also.<sup>2</sup> Marshall's interpretation that these are to be regarded as representations of yoni, the female organ of generation, as symbolising motherhood and fertility still appears to be the correct one.<sup>3</sup> We have discussed the significance of liṅga and śrīchakra worship in detail in this work elsewhere.

In Vaiṣṇavism Viṣṇu is often worshipped aniconically in the form of Śālagrāma. The Pāñcharātrins, however, seldom, if at all, enshrine it in the main sanctum. It is usually given a subsidiary position in temple or worshipped in private chapels of the individual householders. The *Bhāradvāja Saṁhitā Pariśiṣṭa* (III. 57-8) states that "Hari is to be always worshipped in images; but when these are wanting then alone other objects are to be used for this purpose. Of these objects again, Śālagrāmas are the best, for a Śālagrāma stone is the celestial form of Hari."<sup>4</sup> The Śālagrāmas are usually procured from the bed of the Gaṇḍakī, a tributary of the Gaṅgā as Bāṇaliṅgas are generally picked up from the bed of the Revā.<sup>5</sup>

*Other Symbols*

In Paurāṇika religion the custom of erecting *dhvajās* or votive columns in honour of the various sectarian deities like Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, Saṅkarashaṇa, Pradyumna, Kubera, Skanda-Mahasena and others, before their temples was very popular. These dhvajās evolved out of the Yūpastambhas which were erected by kings and noble men of the earlier period (and of the later ages also) in

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sinha, *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, p. 104 f.

<sup>2</sup>Goyal, *RHAI*, I, p. 18 f.

<sup>3</sup>Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 169; cf. Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 126 f.

<sup>4</sup>Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 458.



commemoration of the performance of the various Vedic sacrifices. At Besnagar was found the famous Garuḍadhvaja of Heliodorus and also separate *tāla*, *garuḍa* and *makara* capitals suggesting the probability that the first three of the four *Vyūhas* (or three of the Pañchavṛshnivīras) viz., Vāsudeva, Saṅkarshaṇa and Pradyumna were enshrined in the locality.<sup>1</sup>

In Paurāṇika Hinduism, specially Vaishṇavism, *attributes* or *weapons* meant to be placed in the hands of the deities were usually personified and represented anthropomorphically. Such representations came to be designated generally as the Āyudhapurushas. *Chakra* and *gadā* in human form are found as early as the Gupta period; *śaṅkha* and rarely *padma* are also anthropomorphised in the Vishṇuite reliefs of the early and late mediaeval periods of Eastern and Northern India. Various other emblems, such as *Vajra*, *Śakti*, *daṇḍa*, *khaḍga*, *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, *triśūla*, etc., are also personified in late iconographic texts, but in art they are seldom shown in human form.<sup>2</sup>

*Lotus* is one of the most popular religious symbols. It symbolises life floating on the surface of creative waters. Śrī-Lakshmi is associated in every possible way with lotus. She is praised as 'lotus-born', 'standing on a lotus', 'seated on a lotus', 'lotus-coloured', 'lotus-thighed', 'lotus-eyed', 'abounding in lotuses', 'decked with lotus garlands', etc.

The *mountain symbol*, usually with three, five or six arches, is found variously represented on ancient India coins. According to Spooner the Jainas drew this figure as emblematic of a Tīrthaṅkara and denominative of mount Meru. J.N. Banerjea, however, feels that the symbol of mountain, with a crescent above it, may be the aniconic representation of Śiva.

On ancient Indian silver Punch-marked coins we find an extensive use of the *taurine symbol* in different combinations. It is also found used in some pieces of early Maurya art. The *Nandipāda symbol* represents a certain development of the taurine symbol. It closely resembles the three-pointed *Triratna symbol* representing the Buddha, Dharma (Law) and Saṅgha (Buddhist order). The Jainas also adopted the symbol to serve their own purpose.

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 537.

The symbol of *cross* found on some Indus seals may be traced on the reverse of some uninscribed cast coins. It symbolises the twin principles of male and female fertility. It may also be regarded as a simplified version of *svastika*.

### *Meaning of Image Worship*

The word 'image' is derived from the Latin word *imago*. It has the basic sense of 'likeness'. Its close parallels in Sanskrit are *pratikṛti*, *pratimā*, *vimbha*, *sandrś*, etc. The term 'icon' on the other hands is derived from the Greek word *eikon* and signifies 'an object of worship' (usually but not necessarily an image).<sup>1</sup> A *pratimā* may or may not be an object of worship. The *āyasī pratimā* of Bhīma crushed by Dhṛtarāshṭra and *suvarṇa pratimā* of Sītā mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* were not meant for worship. According to J.N. Banerjea the words like *pratimā* and *sandrś* were used for symbolic representation of divinities which were not associated with particular cults,<sup>2</sup> but in course of time they acquired the significance of *archā* (object of regular worship). Pāṇini in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* uses the terms *pratimā* and *pratikṛti* probably for images of gods. *Pratikṛti*, in the sense of likeness, is noticed in one of his sūtras (V.3.96); another sūtra under it (V.3.99)—*jīvikārthe chāpaṇye*—refers to certain *pratikṛtis* which are *jīvikārtha* (for livelihood) as well as *apaṇya* (not for sale). The rule applies to the images of gods which were made the means of livelihood, not by selling them but by exhibiting them from door to door.<sup>3</sup> Patañjali uses the term *archā* and says that the Mauryas had images of gods (*archās*) made for obtaining gold (*Mauryair hiraṇyārthibhiḥ archchhā prakalpītā*).

### *Was Image Worship Prevalent in the Vedic Society?*

The antiquity of image worship in India is a highly controversial problem. According to some scholars including R.P. Chanda the excavations of the Indus Civilization have proved that worship of images of human and superhuman beings in Yogic postures, both seated and standing, was prevalent in India in the chalcolithic period. He regards stone līngas, the figurines of mother goddess, and the seals of Paśupati and the seven divinities as cult icons.<sup>4</sup> But J.N. Banerjea

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Chanda, R.P., *Medieval Indian Sculpture in the British Museum*, p. 9.

is of the opinion that nature of these images cannot be determined till the mysty of the Indus script is solved.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the Vedic period, Max Müller, Wilson, Macdonell, Dayanand Sarasvati, R.P. Chanda, etc. believed that the Vedic Aryans knew no image worship or temples. Their religion was the religion of yajñas performed to please abstract gods of nature though they were described as having human forms. Thus the very nature of Vedic religion precludes the worship of images in that period. However Bollensen, S.V. Venkateswara, B. Ch. Bhattacharya and many others hold the opposite view. They have pointed out<sup>2</sup> that (1) in the *RV* gods are often described as *divo naras* or *naras* and mention is made of their *vapuḥ*, *tanu*, *rūpa*, etc. (2) Several Ṛgvedic passages refer to images of gods. For example: 'men decorate Indra and Agni' (*Indrāgni śumbhatā narah*), 'who will buy this my Indra for ten cows' (*Ka imam daśabhirmamendram krīṇāti dhenubhiḥ*). The *RV* IV. 17.4 refers to *Indrasya kartā*. (3) Sometimes *Vṛtra*, the foe of Indra, is mentioned in plural (*Vṛtrāṇi*). It may only mean that here mention is made of his various images. (4) The Vedic gods were supposed to have two types of bodies, abstract and finite. Image was evidently regarded as the temporary finite resting place of the abstract body. The *AV* (VII. 31), for example, asks the deity, "with your real body enter this concrete body" (*svayā tanvā tanumairayata*). (5) Venkateswara even finds reference to temples in *RV* VII. 59.10, etc. where Maruts are described as *Gṛhamedhāsa* (=in the house or temple).<sup>3</sup>

J.N. Benerjea, however, makes a distinction between the religion of the Vedic priests (which is described in detail in the Vedic texts) and the religious practices of the pre-Aryan settlers of India. The Vedic Aryans, according to Banerjea, did not practice image worship. He points out that: (1) The anthropomorphic nature of the Vedic gods mentioned by Bollensen etc. is no proof of their worship in the form of image for they are always remembered as forces of nature. (2) While discussing the form of gods (*ākāra chintanam devatānām*) even Yāska clearly states that the view that gods are *apurushavidhāḥ* (those who do not resemble

<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43 ff.

<sup>3</sup>*DHI*, p. 47.

human form) is more correct. (3) Banerjea does not accept the interpretation of Venkateswara etc. of the Vedic passages quoted above. (4) The Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra works, which describe yajñas in detail, do not mention the use of archās. There is no record at all of the Vedic temples or images. (5) The references to the purchase of Indra probably indicate not to his actual images but to his symbols. In this connection Coomaraswamy also quotes the analogy of the Bodhi tree and the pādukās of the Buddha worshipped as Buddha himself. Banerjea even doubts whether the Indra symbols mentioned in the *RV* were worshipped at all. The reference to the images of Vṛtra in plural shows that these were made only for *abhichāra* (magic) purposes.<sup>1</sup>

However Banerjea is ready to accept the prevalence of image worship in the Vedic age among the non-Aryans. (1) The *Śiśnadevāḥ* mentioned in the *RV* were probably those who had phallus for their deity (*Śiśnadevāḥ yeshām te*). As we have already seen, the numerous phalli discovered from the Indus Valley sites were probably the cult objects of these people. They were looked upon with contempt by the Vedic people. Even when phallus became the emblem of Rudra, orthodox Aryans were hesitant to accept it.<sup>2</sup> The *Mūradevāḥ* were also a non-Aryan people. In one verse Indra is requested to kill them. Sāyaṇa explains the term *mūradeva* as *Rākshasa* but A.C. Das observes that the term may mean 'senseless—like stones'. The word may therefore mean 'those who worship stone images which are senseless objects'.<sup>3</sup> A.P. Banerjee-Shastri suggests that the term Maurya (in the passage of the *Mahābhāshya* quoted above) does not refer to the royal Mauryas but to the Mūradevas and that the term *mūrti* is derived from their tribal name.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Gradual Recognition of Image Worship in the Aryan Society*

The partial recognition of the image worship among the Aryans occurs in the latest sections of the Vedic literature—the *khilas* to the earlier Brāhmaṇas and Aranyakas and the Gṛhyasūtras, etc. According to Gopinath Rao image worship originated

<sup>1</sup>For references see *DHI*, p. 47 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Goyal, *RHAI*, I, p. 21 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Das, *Rigvedic Culture*, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup>Banerjee-Shastri, A.P., 'Iconism in India', *IHQ*, XII, pp. 335-41.



among the mentally poor people who could not conceive the figure of god in their mind. Among the factors which increased the popularity of image worship the most important was the doctrine of bhakti, the loving adoration to some personal god (*supra*). The gods round whom the new sects and cults developed were not the prominent Vedic gods but were mostly human heroes like Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, etc. or mythical beings like Śiva, Yaksha Maṇibhadra, Pūrṇabhadra, etc. (*supra*). In their cults rendering of one's homage was done by various acts of *pūjā* in which images were necessary (*supra*). In this connection the following facts may be taken into special consideration:<sup>1</sup>

(1) Pāṇini's *sūtra*—*jīvikārthe chāpaṇye* (indicating that some people sold images for livelihood)—as explained by later commentators gives us positive evidence about the concrete representations of deities. Here Pāṇini does not mention the deities themselves but elsewhere he does mention the bhaktas of Vāsudeva, Arjuna and Mahārājas (Lokapālas) (*supra*). (2) Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* mentions a few gods—Viśākha, Skanda and Śiva—whose images were made in his age for worship (*sampratipujārthā*). He also asserts that Mauryas filled their treasury by selling images. (3) In the Durganiveśa section of the *Arthaśāstra*, Kauṭilya refers to the temples of Aparājita, Apratihata, Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Śiva, Vaiśravaṇa, Aśvin and the goddess Madirā. He also refers to images of gods and goddesses carved on wooden door frames of royal underground chambers and to *devadhvajās*, *pratimās* and to procession of gods. (4) The *Āpastamba Grhyaśūtra* mentions the images of Isāna (5) The *Manusmṛti* refers to image worship at several places. It lays down that the images are to be circumbulated, that one should not step over the shadow of gods, that on the *parvas* one should go to the images of gods for protection, etc. However, it deprecates the temple priests, probably because they took money for their bhakti. (6) The *Mahābhārata* often mentions images of gods especially in connection with the various tīrthas. (7) Curtius records that the image of Heracles was carried in front of the army of Porus. (8) In his IVth Rock Edict Aśoka claims that among other things he showed *divyāni rūpāni* (images of gods) to the people (though this reference does not prove the 'worship' of these images). (9) The Ghosūṇḍī inscription of Sarvatāta

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *op. cit.*, p. 85 ff.

(1st century B.C.) refers to the pūjāśilā of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva and the prākāra of Nārāyaṇāvāṭakā.<sup>1</sup> According to Banerjea in the Nārāyaṇavāṭaka images of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva were installed. (10) The Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus of about 100 B.C. was engraved on a pillar which was most likely erected before a shrine of Vāsudeva.<sup>2</sup> (11) A *prāsādottama* (=temple) of Bhagavata (=Kṛṣṇa) was built at the same place by Gautamīputra Bhāgavata at about the same time.<sup>3</sup> It must have contained images. (12) The Mora well inscription of the time of Mahākshatrapa Rājuvula's son Soḍāsa mentions the stone images of Vṛṣṇi Pañchavīras enshrined in a stone temple (*śaila devagṛha*). Here the words used for images are *archā* and *pratimā*.<sup>4</sup> (13) It is true that actual images of gods appear somewhat late in Indian archaeology but this paucity may be easily explained. Firstly, one should remember that the iconoclastic zeal of the Muslims has been the cause of destruction of a large number of images. Secondly, the ancient practice of making images of wood and clay has been responsible for this paucity. The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* lays down that images of gods and goddesses should be made of wood. Thirdly, we should not forget that the icons make their appearance on Indian coins at least a few centuries before the Christ.

From the above discussion it is obvious that (1) the Vedic Aryans did not practice image worship, but (2) some non-Aryan people of the Vedic age probably worshipped cult images. (3) In the post-Vedic period, however, specially after the advent of bhakti, image worship gradually became a part of Brāhmaṇical religion.

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Saṃgraha*, Jaipur, 1982, p. 173 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 156 ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 204 ff.

## Chapter 5

# Social Philosophy of epic-Pauranika Religion and Rituals

### *Main features of the Hindu Social Life*

The basic outline of the Hindu Society had emerged long before the transformation of the Vedic religion into Paurāṇika dharma. The Hindu society, as is well-known, was based on Varṇāśramadharma. The four-fold *varṇa* system which later on degenerated into caste or *jāti* system prevailed almost throughout the country. In this system the Brāhmaṇas enjoyed the most honoured position. Together with the Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas, the next two varṇas, they were known as *dvijas* or twice-born. The Śūdras were the lowest of the four varṇas. Their position had considerably declined. They could not study the Veda and perform the Vedic sacrifices. They received heavier punishment for committing certain offences for which the Brāhmaṇas escaped with lighter punishment.<sup>1</sup> The *antyajas* were 'born of the lowest castes'. Whether all the Śūdras were *antyajas* or not is a controversial question.<sup>2</sup> There was no untouchability in the Vedic age but it had become an important feature of the Hindu society of the Paurāṇika period.

Theoretically a Hindu was expected to pass through the four stages or *āśramas* of life—brahmacharya, gṛhastha, vānaprastha and sannyāsa.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not a person could adopt sannyāsa immediately after brahmacharya is a point on which the Dharmaśāstras differ. However, generally Manu's view was popular according to which one must pass through the gṛhasthāśrama because it is

<sup>1</sup>We have discussed the emergence of the caste system in Brāhmaṇical society and the attitude of the Buddhists towards it in *RHAI*, I, p. 103 ff.; 272 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Majumdar, A.K., *Concise History of India*, III, New Delhi, 1983, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>For our views on the origin of the *āśrama* organisation, vide *RHAI*, I, p. 129ff.

only as a *gṛhastha* that one can pay his debt to the *devas*, *pitṛs* and *ṛshis* (*ṛṇatraya*). A *gṛhastha* was expected to perform a number of *samśkāras* which alone entitled him to become a *dvija*. The *upanayana* and marriage were most important of them, and *samśkāras* from *garbhādhāna* to *upanayana* were obligatory for all male *dvijas*. The rules of marriages (which were theoretically of eight types) were quite strict. The *Dharmaśāstras* permit *anuloma* marriages, that is marriages of a male with a female of the same or lower caste. *Pratiloma* marriages, that is marriage of a girl with a lower caste male, were prohibited. On the detailed rules about them our authorities differ.

An important feature of the Hindu society of the *Paurāṇika* age was the decline in the position of women. Now gradually widow remarriages and *niyoga* were prohibited, the institution of *sati* was popularised and female education considerably declined. In many passages of the *Dharmaśāstrika* texts women and *Śūdras* are lumped together in the same category and are relegated to a low status.<sup>1</sup> The institution of slavery not only existed and was recognised, but flourished everywhere. It is against this general background that the role of the epic-*Paurāṇika* religion as an instrument of social change may be studied. But first let us discuss of the attitude of the people of the *Paurāṇika* age towards their Vedic heritage because it had much to do with their outlook towards social problems.

### *Vedism and epic-Paurāṇika Religion*

Though the epic-*Paurāṇika* religion emphasized *bhakti* and *pūjā* of the new sectarian deities, stressed the importance of the *Purāṇas* as religious texts and tended to underplay the significance of Vedic ritualism, yet it did not altogether give up faith in the authority of the *Vedas* and Vedic mode of worship. It may appear somewhat contrary to much what has been said in the preceding pages, but it is a fact that the *Purāṇas* are full of passages which seemingly advocate the importance of the *Vedas* and the religion of

<sup>1</sup>For a study of such references see Sharma, R.S., 'Co-references to Woman and *Śūdra* in Early Literature', *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983, Ch. V, p. 45 ff.



sacrifice. The authors of the Purāṇas realized that unless the authority of the Vedas is established, Vedic ritualism is given at least theoretical recognition and the Varṇāśramadharmā is strengthened, the Hindu society cannot be re-vitalized. Hence without giving up the new emphasis on *bhakti* and *pūjā* they accept Vedic rituals also and adopt various means for this purpose. In the *Vishṇu P.* the Vedas are said to constitute the body of Vishṇu. In the *Vāyu P.* Śiva is identified with the Vedas and sacrifice. In the *Varāha P.* Sāvitrī is said to be the mother of the Vedas. identified with Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā and Rudra. In the *Bhāgavata P.* also Vishṇu, in his Boar incarnation, is identified with sacrifice. Regarding the mission of the incarnation of Śiva, the *Kūrma P.* declares that the blue-red Śaṅkara incarnates himself for establishing the Śrauta and Smārta dharma and for doing good to the devotees. In the *Devībhāgavata P.* at one place Śuka argues that the Vedic religion which encourages the slaughter of animals cannot confer final release. To this Janaka replies that the killing of animals in sacrifices is equivalent to no killing because there is no special intention of killing on the part of the sacrificer.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Kūrma P.* Durgā declares : “Practise the Varṇāśramadharmā with self-knowledge as directed by the Vedas and lawbooks for final beatitude.... Dharma, according to the Vedas and the lawbooks, is sacrifice etc. Dharma originated from the Vedas and from nothing else. So, one who is desirous of knowing Dharma or attaining moksha should take recourse to the Vedas which are identical with myself.... There is no Śāstra except the Vedas which can claim to be the source of Dharma. There are of course, the literatures of the Vāmas, Ārhataś, Kāpilas, Pāñcharātras and many other sects, but these were declared by Devī herself with a view to deluding those people who mislead others on the strength of bad scriptures.”<sup>2</sup> The various other Purāṇas point out that the avatāras of Vishṇu and Śiva were intended for the revival of Dharma and the performances of sacrifices. According to the *Vāyu P.* ‘When sacrifices grew rare, lord Vishṇu was born again and again for establishing Dharma and destroying Adharma’. The *Vishṇu P.* declares that when the practices taught by the Vedas and the institutes of law shall nearly have ceased, and the close of the Kali age

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, *Purāṇic Records*, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 233.

shall be near a portion of that divine being shall be born as Kalkin to destroy all the Mlechchhas and thieves and re-establish righteousness upon earth.<sup>1</sup>

The external proof of this tendency is the fact that kings of the Paurāṇika age on the one hand claim that they were great devotees of Śiva (Paramamāheśvaras) or Viṣṇu (Paramabhāgavatas) or Sūrya (Paramādityabhaktas) etc. and, on the other, preclaim the performance by them of great Vedic sacrifices like aśvamedha. A large number of kings of the pre-Gupta age, the rulers of the Gupta and Vākāṭaka royal houses and their contemporaries and also the kings of the post-Gupta age prove the point conclusively.<sup>2</sup> The Purāṇas also contain stories of the various kings of different ages who performed numerous sacrifices, gave heavy priestly fees to Brāhmaṇas and repaired to heaven to enjoy their fruit.

However, it does not mean that the Paurāṇika thinkers accepted the Vedic ritualism in toto. Actually for the common man they re-interpreted the meaning of sacrifice itself. The concept of the Pañchayajña of the Paurāṇika age clearly shows the trend of the age : now study is brahmayajña (Vedic recitation), tarpaṇa (offering libation to the ancestors) is pitṛyajña (elaborate rituals for ancestors in Vedic times), homa (offering clarified butter into the fire) is devayajña (sacrifice to the gods), bali (or gifts to living beings) is bhūtayajña (sacrifice to creatures) and hospitality is nṛyajña (sacrifice to men). Thus a householder becomes the performer of the pañchamahāyajñas without much trouble for none of these is a sacrifice in the Vedic sense.<sup>3</sup> "The trouble, expense and complexity are eliminated and yet the sense of having performed the necessary rituals is created. . . . although man still seems to believe in the efficacy of sacrifices. . . . the sacrifices themselves are entirely different. Hence the scriptures are full of formulas of substitution."<sup>4</sup> If one visits a pilgrimage and performs the necessary penances for two or three days, one collects the merit of this or that sacrifice. If one takes and fulfils a vow one also gains the merit of this or that sacrifice. If one gives proper dakṣiṇā to

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>HIG, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharji, Sukumari, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 353.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

the worthy Brāhmaṇas one acquires the merit of so many sacrifices. Thus the merit of sacrifices are obtained through easier religious practices.<sup>1</sup>

*Hindu Attitude towards Social Change: Doctrine of Ekavākyatā vs. Moral Relativism*

As in other periods of Indian history, in the epic-Paurāṇika age also great and constant changes took place in social organisation (e.g. caste system became more rigid in matters of food, marriage, social behaviour etc. and position of women and Śūdras deteriorated) and in religious rites and customs. Animal sacrifices, though occasionally performed even now, ceased to be popular and cult of non-violence gained the upper hand leading to a new interpretation of the concept of sacrifice itself (*supra*). The Smṛtis written from time to time naturally reflect these changes giving rise to great conflict in socio-religious norms among themselves. But it was no problem for their authors because they believed that the Smṛtis have Veda as their source. Manu says that for those who desire to know Dharma, Śruti or Veda is the highest authority (XII.96). While discussing the sources of Dharma (Śruti, Smṛti, *sadāchāra* and two more) the *Mitāksharā* on Yājñavalkya I.7 states the general rule that in case of conflict each preceding one is more powerful than the each succeeding one.<sup>2</sup> But for the commentators and authors of digests on śmṛti law all the Dharmaśāstras that they consider are equally authoritative, none having precedence over the other. For them the Dharmaśāstras themselves are the expression of eternal law though their ultimate source is the Veda, that is the Truth. The date at which this Truth was revealed in human language is of little importance. Therefore according to the traditional view despite the apparent contradictions and discrepancies that seemingly exist between them, complete consensus of opinion among the successive Smṛtis has to be assumed. This is the famous doctrine of *ekavākyatva* which the medieval commentators inherited from Mīmāṃsā.<sup>3</sup> They did not accept that the Smṛtis were written to cater the changing needs of different times and different regions. They vigorously

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Kane, *HD*, V, ii, p. 1264 f.

<sup>3</sup>Lingat, Robert, 'Time and Dharma', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, VI, ed. by Louis Dumont and D. Pocock, The Hague, 1962, p. 7 ff.

struggle with ingenious devices to create uniformity in conflict.<sup>1</sup> This attitude created the myth of the extremely conservative and unchanging nature of Indian society which the writings of Thoreau, Poussin, Garbe, Sorokin and others popularized.<sup>2</sup> But as pointed out by Robert Lingat the differences noticed between the various Dharmaśāstras are undeniably the traces of the changes that were taking place in the ideas and mores during the long period over which this literature developed. Hence the rise and growth of the modern historical school of Dharmaśāstra studies which seeks to establish chronological evolution of the Smṛti laws.<sup>3</sup>

Here it may be noted that the authors of the Smṛtis did not themselves believe in the doctrine of *ekavākyatā*. They do not try to reconcile their own views with the views of earlier Smṛti authors. They expressly favour moral relativism in more than one ways. Firstly, they frankly admit that some people practise customs contrary to their teachings. Baudhāyana had already enumerated aberrant observances practised by the Brāhmaṇas of both North and South and conceded that no blame should be laid upon the Brāhmaṇas who observe practices of a particular region for, according to him, local usages must prevail. Secondly, Smṛti writers including Manu and Yājñavalkya (I.156) prescribe that one should give up what was once deemed to be dharma if it has become hateful to the people. It is significant that here the word used is *lokavikrushiṭa* or *lokavidviṣṭa* (hated or reviled by the people) and not *śiṣṭa-vidviṣṭa* (hated by the *śiṣṭas*),<sup>4</sup> though elsewhere Yājñavalkya (II. 21) proposes that when two Smṛtis are in conflict, reasoning based on the practices of the *śiṣṭas* should prevail. On the other hand, Bṛhaspati concedes the superiority of the Manusmṛti as representing the real view of the Vedas (which led to the practice of interpolating new passages in this work opposing what it had already declared). Gautama (I.5) opines that there should be option and Gobhila pleads for the acceptance of the majority view. Thus it is clear that the Smṛti authors did not try to

<sup>1</sup>Singh, S., *Evolution of the Smṛti Law*, Varanasi, 1972, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Pathak, V.S., Foreword to *The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India*, by J.M. Rai, Varanasi, 1974.

<sup>3</sup>For a detailed study of the various approaches to the study of Smṛti law, vide, S. Singh, *op. cit.*, Ch. I.

<sup>4</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1270.



establish the theory that all texts bearing this name teach the same thing. Thirdly, as early as Manu the theory of the decadence of humanity and the withering of virtue in the course of the four yugas was propounded. Manu (I. 85) compared dharma to a bull who is deprived of one foot in each successive yuga and concluded that "Otherwise are the dharmas in the kṛta age (*Anyekṛtayuge dharmāḥ*), otherwise in the Tretā age and the Dvāpara age (*Tretāyām-Dvāparepare*), otherwise in the Kali age (*anye Kaliyuge*) because of the debasement of these ages (*yuga hrāsānurūpataḥ*)". In the *Parāśarasmr̥ti* it is opined that the rules revealed by Manu are valid for the Kṛta age, those by Gautama for the Tretā age, those by Śaṅkhalikhita for the Dvāpara age and those by Parāśara himself for the Kali Age.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Theories of Kalivarjya and Āpaddharma*

The *Bṛhaspatismṛti* also contains a passage where it is maintained that certain customs such as *niyoga* or the recognition of secondary sons other than the adoptive son are no longer possible in the Kali age owing to the spiritual decline of mankind. On the basis of such ideas was later on evolved the theory of *Kalivarjyas* according to which certain practices, even though admitted or prescribed by the Smṛtis, are forbidden in the Kali age. Some authors even imagined that great sages came together at the beginning of the Kali age and declared such rites as prohibited for that age. These rites and practices, about 55 in number, are called Kalivarjyas. These include prohibition of *niyoga*, of offering of the *anubandhyā* cow after *avabhṛta* in the Jyotishṭoma, of allotment of the largest share of the ancestral wealth to the eldest son, of widow-remarriage, of marriage with a *sagotra* or *matṛ sapinḍa* girl, of having relation with a Brāhmaṇa who had undertaken ocean voyage even if he had performed expiation for it, of *sattradīkshā*, of killing of a cow or a bull, of the enjoyment of a cup of wine in the Sautrāmaṇī sacrifice, etc.<sup>2</sup> Alberuni, who visited India in the early decades of the 11th century, heard the Hindus say that in the age before the Bhārata war men were allowed to eat meat of cows, and sacrifices involving the slaughter

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1266.

<sup>2</sup>For details vide, *HD*, III, pp. 926-6.

of cows took place. But all this was forbidden subsequently because men had become too weak to perform their duties.<sup>1</sup>

Another device by which the social thinkers sought to recognise social change without deviating from the past was the doctrine of *Āpaddharmas*—the duties permissible in the times of distress. The doctrine recognises that in the times of distress social and ethical rules become loose and dharma may assume the form of *adharma* and *adharma* may become *dharma*. In such emergencies the higher *varṇas* may adopt the duties of the lower *varṇas* though they should revert to their *svadharma* when the condition of distress is over. The *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Vaiśyas*, for example, may take to arms in order to protect *Brāhmaṇas*, cows and *Vedas* and in acute distress a *Brāhmaṇa* may eat even dog's flesh begged from a *Chāṇḍāla*.<sup>2</sup> The members of the lower *varṇas* however are not permitted to adopt the duties of the higher *varṇas*, though *Śūdras* could adopt the *dharma* of a *Vaiśya*. Thus, in the words of S.K. Belvalkar the Hindu social theorists “developed to their utmost possibilities the convenient notions concerning the “*Āpad-dharmas*” or duties regarded as permissible under stress of circumstances and “*Kali-vrajas*” or actions (e.g. the animal sacrifices) which, although once permissible and even obligatory, have to be abjured under present fallen times of *Kaliyuga*. These two doctrines, worked out with profusion of hair-splitting details, served to ensure a nominal allegiance to the old-world Vedism, while actually affording ample scope to the inevitable modifications in belief and practice that were bound to come in with the progress of times. The art of deviating from the past while yet honestly professing to serve it was thus cultivated well nigh to perfection.”<sup>3</sup>

According to P.V. Kane it would have been more honest if the *Dharmaśāstra* writers had said that the changed circumstances required that the words of the *Veda* and rules of the *Smṛtis* should not be followed.<sup>4</sup> But in our opinion perhaps it was better what they did in the Indian circumstances. Placed as they

<sup>1</sup>*Al-Biruni's India*, trans. by Sachau, II, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>See the *Āpaddharma* Section of the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mbh.*

<sup>3</sup>Belvalkar, S.K., *Shree Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, Poona, 1929, p. 179 f.

<sup>4</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1269 f.

were between the eternal law as represented by the rules of Dharma and the innumerable customs and usages of this vast sub-continent that constitute the living positive law, the commentators were able to suggest a number of different, sometimes contradictory interpretations all based upon the same authority of the Dharmaśāstras. Thus certain practices, often different from each other, could be recognised and legitimized. Their method had the advantage of conferring to the interpretation a pliancy which could never have been obtained had the Dharmaśāstra been dealt with as temporal legislation. The complexity of the Indian world could hardly accomodate a more uniform type of law.<sup>1</sup>

### *Doctrine of Karman*

The social outlook of the epic-Paurāṇika religion was based upon the theory of Karman which came into vogue in the Upanishadic age. It was anticipated in the *RV* in the form of the concept of *ṛta*.<sup>2</sup> As we have shown in the first volume of this work,<sup>3</sup> in the age of the *Brāhmaṇas* the word *Karman* meant meritorious sacrificial acts (*yajña karman*), that is the performance of Vedic rituals for obtaining material benefits and obviating evil. It connoted *ishṭāpūrta* or sacrificial acts the results of which are stored in heaven. In the Upanishadic age and in heterodox religions it came to acquire a moral significance : that is good deeds produce good results and bad deeds produce bad results, and nobody can escape from their consequences. Hence karmans determine not only the character but also the future life of the doer. As put by the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upa.* (IV. 4.5) "According as one acts, according as one behaves so does he become (*yathākārī yathāchārītathā bhavati*)". The concept of rebirth in accordance with previous karmans is clearly formulated in the *Praśna* (III. 7), *Śvetāśvatara* (V.7) and *Maitrī* (III. 1) *Upanishads*. Prof. G.C. Pande<sup>4</sup> rightly describes it as a great moral revolution. It tended to render obsolete the performance of *yajñas* and popularized the notion that happiness and release from suffering may be obtained only through good conduct.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Maine, Henry Sumner, *Village Communities in the East and West*, 1890, quoted by Robert Lingat, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 244 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Pande, G.C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 284 ff.



This moral revolution, which gave a new meaning to the terms *pāpa* and *punya*, *dushkrta* and *sukrta* etc., is vividly portrayed in the *Smṛtis*, the *Epics*, the *Gītā*, the *Purāṇas*, etc. Some Western thinkers such as A.B. Keith have opined that "the conception of karma. . . is essentially fatalistic and fatalism is not for a normal mind a good incentive to moral progress"<sup>1</sup> But as argued by S. Gopalan the "equation of karman with *fatalism* is symptomatic of a misunderstanding of the tone and tenor of Hindu social philosophy inasmuch as the activistic element in it are overlooked completely"<sup>2</sup>. The term *fate* signifies the individual's utter helplessness, for it is considered to be a force completely external to the individual. On the other hand, the law of karman rests on the assumptions that social life can be meaningful only if there is freedom of will which enables man to choose the good and eschew the evil, and there is principle of regularity governing human life<sup>3</sup>. As put in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, just as a chariot cannot move on a single wheel, so destiny (in the sense of past karmans) cannot accomplish its end until it is aided by human endeavour.<sup>4</sup> "The essence of the doctrine of karma," Nagaraja Rao observes, "is that it brings home to us the view that the world is not a waste land and that human life is not an accident in a blind interpersonal process".<sup>5</sup> Emphasizing the responsibility aspect of the doctrine of karman Prof. Daya Krishna writes, "The idea that one can be responsible for actions which have not been done by one's own self and that one can be redeemed by an action done by somebody else may seem positively outrageous to a sensibility which feels the individual as essentially apart from the relationship with others in which he may happen to be accidentally involved. The doctrine of karma in traditional Hindu thought primarily reflects this basic presupposition that it would be an immoral world indeed if one were to reap the fruits of someone else's actions".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Keith, A.B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads*, II, p. 596.

<sup>2</sup>Gopalan, S., *Hindu Social Philosophy*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>I. 349-51.

<sup>5</sup>Nagaraja Rao, P., 'Some Reflections and Remarks on Karman and Rebirth', *Indian Philosophical Annual*, I, p. 140 (quoted by S. Gopalan, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

<sup>6</sup>Daya Krishna in *Social Philosophy: Past and Future*, p. 14.



*Karman in Relation to the Doctrine of Rebirth*

The doctrine of karman was inter-related with the doctrine of rebirth. In the words of S.N. Dasgupta "One of the presuppositions of the karma theory was that the unseen potency (*adṛṣṭa*) of the action generally required sometime before it could bring in the appropriate type of fruit (good or bad) to the 'doer'. The fruits so accumulated prepare the 'items of experience' for the next life. Only the fruits of those actions which are extremely wicked or particularly good could be reaped in this life. The nature of the next birth of a man is determined by the nature of pleasurable or painful actions of this life. . . . As there is no ultimate beginning in time of this world-process, so there is no time at which any person first began his actions or experiences. Man has had infinite number of past lives of the most varied nature and instincts of each kind of life exist dormant in the life of individual and thus whenever he has any particular birth as this or that animal or man, the special instincts of that life (technically called *vāsanās*) come forth. . . . When once certain actions become fit for giving certain experiences, these cannot be avoided, but those actions which have not matured are uprooted once for all if the person attains true knowledge".<sup>1</sup>

Thus the twin theories of karman and rebirth provided an apparent basis for the *varṇāśramadharma* by proclaiming that one's social status is determined by his or her previous karmans. According to the *Chhāndogya Upa.* (V. 10. 7) a person of *ramaṇīyācharaṇa* (good conduct) obtains *ramaṇīya yoni*. Gautama (XI. 29) avers that one's *varṇa* and *āśrama* depend on one's own karmans. Actually the whole epic-Paurāṇika social outlook is based on this basic assumption.

*Prāyaścitta, Karmavipāka and Śrāddha*

On the doctrine of karman depended the attitude regarding the expiation of sin (*prāyaścitta*). In the orthodox Vedic tradition the term *prāyaścitta* meant rectification of error in the performance of the Vedic ritual (expiation of *vidhi aparādha*) though in some passages the word has nothing to do with sin and merely means

<sup>1</sup>Dasgupta, S.N., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 72 f.

'doing something which would get rid of some accidental mishap'<sup>1</sup>. Now, after the emergence of the doctrine of karman, *prāyaścitta* came to mean atonement for immoral action (*pātaka*) involving a set of bodily mortificatory practices to neutralize the retributive potential of evil actions.<sup>2</sup> Sins are stated by Bṛhaspati and others as of two kinds viz. committed intentionally and committed unintentionally. Whether *prāyaścitta* can destroy intentionally committed sins, is a question on which authorities differ.<sup>3</sup> Further, the *Smṛtis* evolved the doctrine that if a sinner did not undergo *prāyaścitta* for his sins, he has to suffer torment in hell and is thereafter born as some insect or lower animal or tree on account of some remnants of his sins and then is born as a human being afflicted with diseases or defects. The last two consequences are described as *karmavipāka* (the fruition of evil deeds)<sup>4</sup> which implies that the human beings have to experience in Heaven or Hell the consequences of their deeds.<sup>5</sup>

The doctrines of karman, rebirth and *karmavipāka* appear to be somewhat irreconcilable with the practice of *śrāddha* which occupies an important place in the Paurāṇika religion. The word *Śrāddha* is evidently derived from *sraddhā*. The *Mitāksharā* on *Yājñavalkya* I.217 defines *śrāddha* as "abandonment with faith of an article of food or some substitute thereof intending it for (the benefit of) the departed".<sup>6</sup> The doctrines of rebirth and karman imply that the soul leaving one body enters into a new one while the doctrine of *śrāddha* involves the belief that even after a lapse of hundred years the souls of ancestors are capable of enjoying in an ethereal body the essence of food offered to them. The problem posed by this contradiction is found raised in several *Sūtra* works, *Smṛtis*, *Purāṇas* and other texts and various solution of it are given. For example, the *Matsya P.* opines that if after death one's father

<sup>1</sup>*HD*, IV, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Krishnan, Y., 'The Doctrine of Karma as a Formative and Innovative Factor in Indian Society and Religions', *Studies in Religion and Change*, ed. by Madhu Sen, p. 15 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, *HD*, IV, p. 61 ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Chatterji, B., 'Some Aspects of Religious Beliefs and Practices in Ancient India', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>*HD*, IV, p. 334.

becomes a god the food offered to him in Śrāddha becomes nectar, if he becomes a daitya the food reaches him in the form of various enjoyments, if he becomes a beast it becomes grass for him, and so on. According to Viśvarūpa gods have access everywhere and also have power to gratify Pitṛs wherever they may be. Another reply is that it is a question concerned with śāstra and what the śāstra says on this point should be accepted.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Doctrine of Karman and Belief in Astrology*

Belief in fate was fostered in ancient India by some heretical sects such as that of the Ājīvikas. As we have shown in the first volume of this work<sup>2</sup> the Ājīvikas believed that the destiny of human beings was fixed and predetermined and that what is ordained could not be changed by the free will and action of human agents. Some Gṛhyasūtras attribute some omens to a good bride. Later on Greek impact contributed to the belief in the influence of the stars on human life and a system of horoscope developed. It was to some extent against the doctrine of karman though in *phalitajyotiṣa* it is maintained that the stars only foretell the consequences of the past deeds. Some persons such as Kauṭilya questioned the usefulness of consulting stars but from the Gupta age onwards astrology became an important factor in the mental life of the people. Yājñavalkya ascribes even the rise and fall of kings to planets and recommends their worship. The Epics and Purāṇas popularised astrological ideas. They also deal with śakunas in detail. The *Agni P.* embodies the largest number of verses on astrology. In the *Kṛṣṇi Parāśara* charms and spells for agriculture are laid down. Alberuni, who visited India in the eleventh century, noticed the great importance accorded to astrology in this country.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Synthesis of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti and the Doctrine of Purushārthas*

As noted in the first volume of the present work, the synthesis of the Vedic and non-Vedic thought currents gave birth to the

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid*, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 150 ff.

<sup>3</sup>See Sharma, R.S., *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, 1983, Ch. VIII; Shastri, A.M., *India as seen in the Brhat-Saṃhitā of Varāhamihira*; Yadava, B.N.S., Presidential Address for Section I, Ancient India, Indian History Congress, 1980.



belief that for an integrated development of human personality a synthesis of the path of activism (*pravṛtti*) and the path of renunciation (*nivṛtti*) is necessary. References to both the ways are found throughout the epic-Paurāṇika literature. In the *Mbh.* Yudhishthira proclaims the excellence of *nivṛtti* while his brothers and Draupadī insist on the need for leading a life of strenuous activity (*pravṛtti*). In the epic-Paurāṇika age the classic exposition of complete renunciation as the path of self-realization is attributed to Śaṅkara while *pravṛtti* dharma is best expounded in the *Smṛtis* of Manu etc. The path of *nivṛtti* had little sympathy for society; its prime object was to seek individual self-realization. The path of *pravṛtti* advocated that one could attain perfection only by discharging all his social and individual obligations arising out of his station in life (*svadharma* of the *Gītā*—duties enjoined by one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*).

The Hindu theory of *trivarga* (dharma, artha and *kāma*—roughly translated as morality, material wealth and desires) elaborated by the addition of *moksha* (emancipation) into the doctrine of the four *purushārthas* was the result of the synthesis of the paths of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. It was a recognition of the need for considering carefully the personal as well as the social aspects of man-in-society. None of the four ends—dharma, artha, *kāma* and *moksha*—can be realized apart from life in society. Artha as a value cannot be realized by isolated individuals; it gets significance only in social context. Same is the case with *kāma*. But both these are to be regulated by dharma if an individual is to keep the good of society in his mind. *Moksha* is a more personal goal; but it can also be realized only after one fulfils the demands of social morality. The first three *purushārthas* are regarded as means-values or instrument-values while *moksha* is intrinsic- or end-value. Considering artha and *kāma* as ends-in-themselves would make man self-indulgent and oblivious to the interests of others.<sup>1</sup>

*Emphasis on Pravṛtti Dharma, Gṛhasthāśrama and Svadharma in the epic-Paurāṇika Religion*

However, the attitude of the Epics and Purāṇas was unmistakably in favour of *pravṛtti* dharma and *gṛhasthāśrama*. They glorify

<sup>1</sup>Gopalan, *op. cit.*



the service rendered to one's parents and relatives. Obedience to one's parents is said to be productive of all fruits of dharma. In the *Kūrma P.* people are advised not to do anything against the will of their parents. In the *Padma P.* parents and guru are called tīrthas.

In order to strengthen the basis of Hindus family organisation the Epics and Purāṇas give emphasis on chastity of women. They narrate stories about the supernatural powers of the chaste and devoted wives (*satīs*). For instance one may refer to the story of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* about the Brāhmaṇa leper and his wife.

Though the Purāṇas recognise that final emancipation is attainable only through *nivṛtti dharma*, unlike the Buddhists and the Jainas they do not preach that anybody and everybody should accept *sannyāsa* without caring whether he is fit for it or not, because such a practice is very harmful to society. This ideology had earlier been preached by the Epics.<sup>1</sup> The Purāṇas also advocate that a person should generally pass through the different āśramas performing the duties enjoined by the *Smṛtis* in order to reach the stage of *sannyāsa*. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* Prajāpati Ruchi, who is bent on attaining *moksha* performs acute penance. But his *Pitṛs* appear before him and convince him that marriage and the performance of the daily duties of a householder are necessary for freeing oneself from the debts (*ṛṇas*) one owes to the gods, fathers, men and others. In the *Devībhāgavata P.* Śuka, who looks upon the first three āśramas as obstacles to the attainment of emancipation is instructed by Janaka to pass through all of them in order to loose attraction for the world, because 'the man who is totally free from worldly attachment is entitled to take up *sannyāsa*, not otherwise'. The *Matsya P.* says : The 'holy places (*tīrthas*) are said to be in the houses of those who (abide by the rules) of *Varṇāśrama*'. The *Kūrma P.* states : 'The *gṛhastha* is the source of the (other) three āśramas. Others live on him. Therefore, the *gṛhastha* is the best (of all)'.

Various and interesting means were adopted by the authors of the Purāṇas to establish and popularise the *varṇāśramadharmā*. Firstly often the sages, even gods and goddesses themselves, are made to praise the *varṇāśramadharmā* as the means of attaining

<sup>1</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 102 f.

the sectarian gods. For instance, in the *Vishṇu P.* when being asked by king Sagara as to how Vishṇu can be worshipped, Aurva says : "The Supreme Being is worshipped by him who is loyal to the duties required by his own caste and stage of life." Secondly, to warn the people against violating the rules of the varṇāśramadharma the Purāṇas invented numerous stories which show the results of such violation. For example, in the *Matsya P.* the sons of Rāji, who accept the Jina-dharma after giving up the Vedic Dharma, are killed by Indra. In the *Vishṇu P.* Vena is killed by the sages for his neglect of the varṇāśramadharma, and the demons, who become powerful by practising the Vedic religion are deluded by Māyāmoha only to be defeated and killed by the gods. Thirdly, the Purāṇas narrate horrifying details of hells where sinners are punished with the utmost cruelty for neglecting the varṇāśramadharma and the general rules of morality. Fourthly, the Purāṇas popularised the stories about those who suffered for giving up their own caste or āśrama dharma (*svadharma*). In the *Vāmana P.* Sukeśin, king of the Rākshasas, gives up his *svadharma* and accepts *paradharma* (i.e. *mānava-dharma*). As a result, his moving city is brought down to earth by Sūrya. The concept of the performance of *svadharma* implied that for women service of their husbands and for the Śūdras service of the twice-born are the means of attaining the highest regions.<sup>1</sup> According to the *Vishṇu P.* once the sages were unable to decide the question as to when Dharma, though practised little, is capable of producing the greatest result. They went to Vyāsa for a solution. They found him bathing in the Gaṅgā and heard him shouting, "Excellent, excellent is the Kali age", "Blessed, blessed are the Śūdras" and "Fortunate are women" each time he dived. The sages asked him the cause of his exclamation. Vyāsa explained that all these three are fortunate because in the Kali age duty is discharged with very little trouble by mortals whose faults are all washed away by the water of their individual merits, by Śūdras through diligent attendance only upon the dvijas, and by women through slight effort of obedience to their husbands.

<sup>1</sup>See Sharma, R.S. 'Co-references to Woman and Śūdra in Early Literature', *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983, Ch. V, p. 45 ff.

*Pūrtadharmā (Social Service)*

The new interpretation of rituals and sacrifices had a corresponding effect on ethical practices. It gave a wider and social meaning to religion. True religious life has a mission in the world. A truly religious person, according to the epic-Paurāṇika tradition, is always deeply interested in the welfare of all created beings. According to the *Gītā* (V. 25) the seers whose sins have been washed away, whose doubts have been dispelled by knowledge, whose mind is firmly established in God, and who are actively engaged in promoting welfare of all beings (*sarvabhūta hite ratāḥ*) attain Brahmanirvāṇa. For such a person serving humanity becomes a second nature. He does so without the least exertion.

The term 'social service' is a comparatively new one. Before the 20th century, it meant philanthropy and charity. The Hindus of the epic-Paurāṇika age also insisted on philanthropy and charity. The Purāṇas lay the greatest emphasis on what is called *pūrtadharmā*, works of public utility, charity, social service and relief of the poor and distressed. The word *Iṣṭapūrta* occurs in the *RV* once (X.14.8) and in several of Upanishads in the sense of the works of public utility.<sup>1</sup> The *Amarakośa* defines *ishṭa* as sacrifice and includes in *pūrta* such works as digging a well or tank. A similar meaning of the word *pūrta* is given in the various Purāṇas. For example, according to the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* digging wells and tanks and building temples and distribution of food to those who need it are *pūrta* works. The law books prescribe stringent punishment for those who cause damage to water tanks.<sup>2</sup> The *Mbh.* describes how parks should be laid out and tanks constructed with trees on their banks.<sup>3</sup> The *Varāha P.* and some *Smṛtis* go so far as to declare that a man secures only heaven by *ishṭa* but obtains moksha by *pūrta*. It is here significant to remember that while *ishṭa* dharma was open only to dvijas, *pūrta* dharma could be performed by the Śūdras and women also. In several Purāṇas removal of suffering and distress of others is described as the highest dharma. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* it is said that 'men do not obtain that happiness in heaven or in the Brahmaloḥa

<sup>1</sup>Kane, *HD*, V, ii, p. 947.

<sup>2</sup>Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 948.



which springs from giving relief to the distressed'. The *Vishṇu P.* recommends that a wise man should say and do only that which is for the benefit of creatures here and hereafter. The *Skanda P.* opines that there is no dharma higher than doing good to others and there is no sin greater than harming others. The *Bhāgavata P.* even declares that men have ownership over only that much as would fill their belly; he who thinks as his own what is more than that is a thief.<sup>1</sup>

### *Dānas (Gifts)*

Though huge gifts used to be made to the Brāhmaṇas in the Vedic age also and works like the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* refer to great gifts made to priests by early kings,<sup>2</sup> there is no evidence to show that any vigorous propoganda was made by the Brāhmaṇas to popularize the piety of making gifts earlier than the time of the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*. Nor do the Vedic people seem to have been familiar with the great variety of gifts that are advocated by the *Mbh.* and the *Purāṇas*.<sup>3</sup> As pointed out by Hazra, in the work of pre-Yājñavalkya period there is mention of the simple gifts of land, gold, silver, cows, horses, slave-girls, houses, clothes, food, drink etc., but in the *Purāṇas* the Brāhmaṇas take advantage of the belief of the people in the merits of making gifts of cows etc. to multiply the number of gifts by many new inventions. For instance, they speak of the gifts of artificial cows made of paddy, guḍa, sesamum, water, ghee, etc; of hillocks made of gold, silver, gems, salt, sesamum, ghee, sugar, cotton etc.; of Tulā-purusha, Kalpapādapa,<sup>4</sup> Kāmadhenu, horse, earth, horse and chariot, elephant and chariot, five ploughs, kalpa-latā, cows, etc.—all made of

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 949. Cf. Proudhon's doctrine 'property is theft'.

<sup>2</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 247; cf. Gonda, J., "Gifts' and 'Giving' in the *Rgveda*", *Visheshvaranand Indological Journal*, 11, Pt. i, 1964, pp. 9-30.

<sup>3</sup>Hazra, *Ibid.* The *Mbh.* at numerous places, particularly in the *Anuśāsana-parvan* and the *Matsya* (ch. 82-92, 274-89), *Agni* (ch. 208-13), *Vāraha* (ch. 90-111), *Padma* (V.21, 81-213, 11.39.40, 94; 111.24) and *Kūrma* (11.26) *Purāṇas* discuss the various dānas in detail (Kane, *HD*, V, ii, p. 934).

<sup>4</sup>The fact that Khāravela, a king of the first century B.C., claims to have given Kalpapādapas in gifts, (Goyal, S.R., *Prachina Bhāratiya Abhilekha Samgraha*, p. 363) proves that some of these gifts had become popular in the pre-Christian period.



gold;<sup>1</sup> marriage expenses<sup>2</sup> and so forth. Many of these gifts were quite costly and could be given only by kings or extremely rich people. However the gift of food highly acclaimed in the Purāṇas could be given by all easily.

The Purāṇas make great attempt to popularise the practice of making gifts. They advocate that making gifts is the only piety in the Kali age. Gifts give pleasure to the donor both in this life and the next. A giver of gifts obtains health, wealth, a beautiful wife, and children on earth, and after death, easily attains the highly desired regions named Brahmaloḥa, Viṣṇuloka etc.<sup>3</sup> The Purāṇas fabricate stories of kings and others who made gifts with great effect. They impart a semblance of holiness and importance to the topic of gifts by calling it 'secret' (*guhya*, *rahasya*) and 'old' (*purā-tana*). Further, these teachings are always ascribed to some prominent god or sage in order that they may have unquestionable authority. Sometimes the Paurāṇika Brāhmaṇas become so greedy for gifts that they call upon the kings to force people to be charitable to them, in normal times as well as in famines. In the *Kūrma P.* the king is advised to confiscate the belongings of a man and banish him from his kingdom if the latter does not, after earning money, satisfy the gods and the Brāhmaṇas.<sup>4</sup>

In order to monopolise such gifts for the orthodox Brāhmaṇas the Purāṇas advise the people not be liberal to those Brāhmaṇas and non-Brāhmaṇas who follow other religions. However it must be accepted that inspite of all their preachings for gifts, the Brāhmaṇas never gave up the ideal of leading a life of simplicity and asceticism and got due respect for this from society. As pointed out by Kane, all Brāhmaṇas in ancient times were not priests and Manu (III.152) looks down upon a Brāhmaṇa who worked as a temple-priest. The ideal set before the Brāhmaṇas was of poverty, plain living and high thinking.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Upavāsas, Vratas and Utsavas*

The most striking characteristic of the epic-Paurāṇika religion is the emphasis on how great rewards and results could be secured,

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Kane, *HD*, II, pp. 856-58 for references to donations to Brāhmaṇas of horses and marriage-expenses.

<sup>3</sup>Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 249 f.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 251 f.

<sup>5</sup>Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 936.

specially by women and Śūdras, with very little effort. As noted above, in the *Vishṇu P.* Vyāsa explains that the acquisition of dharma is secured with small trouble in the Kali age by men who wash off all their sins by water in the form of the qualities of their soul; by Śūdras who do the same by being intent on service to dvijas and by women who secure dharma without trouble by rendering service to their husbands.<sup>1</sup>

In pursuance of the same tendency the *Mbh.* and the Purāṇas praise fasts, vratas and utsavas. The term vrata, according to K.S. Sharma, may indicate tribal customs. But in the post-Vedic times it came to mean 'religious vow or undertaking', either obligatory or expiatory. From the early Christian period the difference between *vrata* and *prāyascitta* became thin. For example, Chandrāyaṇa vrata is a *prāyascitta* also. In the pre-Gupta age the number of vratas was limited. In the Gupta and post-Gupta periods the situation changed. According to Kane, there is no topic of Dharmśāstra, except probably that of tirthayātrā and śraddha, on which the Purāṇas are so eloquent as on vrata. On a modest calculation the Purāṇas contain about 25,000 verses on vratas which in the list of the *Vratakosa* are 1,622 in number. Though Kane reduces the number of these Vratas to about 1000 by weeding out repetitions, yet even this figure is staggering if we remember that a year consists of 360 days only. The social base of these vratas was much wider because these could be performed by women and Śūdras also.<sup>2</sup>

The Ṛgvedic word for festivals is *samana* which also meant 'battle'. They were usually named after the month in which they were held and were celebrated in honour of the various gods, snakes etc. One of the most popular festivals seems to have been Indra-mahotsava or Indramaha. In the early historical period the word *samāja* was used in the sense of festival. The *Mbh.*, the Sūtra literature and the inscriptions of Aśoka<sup>3</sup> and Khāravela<sup>4</sup> refer to the various samājas. The early Buddhist and Jaina literatures also contain numerous references to mahas and samājas. The *Mbh.*

<sup>1</sup>HD, V, ii, p. 929.

<sup>2</sup>HD, V, i, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Chatterji, A.K., 'Religious Festivals of Ancient India', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 46 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Prācīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Samgraha*, p. 36 f.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 361.

refers to festivals held in the honour of Paśupati, Brahmā etc. and the *Āyārāṅga Sutta* refers to festivals held in honour of Mukunda (Viṣṇu), Skanda, Indra, snakes, etc.<sup>1</sup> The Vasantotsava is frequently mentioned in the classical Sanskrit texts such as the *Daśakumāracharita*, the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, the *Mudrārākshasa*, etc. According to the *Bhaviṣyottara P.* it was held in honour of the demoness Hoḍikā. Many other festivals are described in these texts.<sup>2</sup>

As pointed out by Kane, it is difficult to draw a strict line between vratas and utsavas; what are called utsavas (festivals) have also an element of religious rites and conversely many a vratas have some elements of a festival.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Mbh.* vratas and fasts are equal to sacrifices in the matter of rewards. In the *Padma P.* they are regarded as superior to sacrifice. By performing a sacrifice one may go to heaven, but one who observes Kārttikavrata goes to Vaikuṇṭha. Nṛga, who was a Śūdra in his previous birth, became a king in the next birth by virtue of the observance of the Buddhadvādaśīvrata. Bhadrāśva, who served a Vaiśya in his earlier birth, became king by burning a lamp throughout the night in a Viṣṇu temple on the dvādaśī of the śuklapaksha of the month of Āśvin. The *Brahma P.* says that the reward secured by worshipping sun for a single day cannot be obtained by hundreds of Vedic sacrifices. Extolling the Jayantivrata the *Padma P.* states that in the body of its performer all holy places and deities reside. The *Bhaviṣya P.* declares that a man crosses the deep ocean of hells by means of the boats of vratas, upavāsas and niyamas. According to the *Mbh.* one who does not eat on the Ekādaśī of both the fortnights does not go to hell. In the *Varāha P.* in reply to the question 'how can a poor man reach God' it is said that he can do so by vratas and fasts. The *Brahma P.* remarks that by merely taking the name of Keśava, in Kaliyuga a man obtains the same rewards that one got in Kṛtayuga by deep meditation, in Tretā by performing sacrifices and in Dvāpara by the worship of images. Thousands of such statements from the Epics and the Purāṇas may easily be culled together. The keynote of all of them is how one can secure great rewards with the help of vratas upavāsas, etc.

<sup>1</sup>Chatterji, A.K., *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Kane, *HD*, V, i, p. 57.



*Tīrthayātrā (Pilgrimage)*

Tīrthayātrās also played an important role in the epic-Paurāṇika religion. Today, spread over whole of the Indian sub-continent are innumerable tīrthas. Some of them grew around ancient legends and hero-cults, but most of them are said to have been sanctified by particular gods and goddesses. These are usually situated by the side or on the confluence of rivers or on mountains, or by the sea side.<sup>1</sup> According to one view the introduction of plough cultivation was the basic factor responsible for the rise and growth of tīrthas.<sup>2</sup> According to another view ancient towns retained their identity as tīrthas when they declined in early medieval times.<sup>3</sup> According to R.S. Sharma the proliferation of tīrthas was caused by several factors—rapid formation of new states, betterment of agricultural techniques, fresh settlements and colonisation of Brāhmaṇas, decline of ancient cities, etc. Many tīrthas seem to have had Tāntrika origin.<sup>4</sup>

The word tīrtha occurs frequently in the *RV* and other Saṃhitās. In some passages it means 'road' or 'way'. At other places it probably means a holy place or river. In the *RV* waters and certain specific rivers are referred to with great reverence as holy. At one place in this text aranyāni (forest) is also invoked as a deity. However, even by the age of the Sūtras and early Smṛtis tīrthas had not acquired a prominent position. But in the Epics and the Purāṇas they are highly lauded and placed even above sacrifices. The Vanaparvan of the *Mbh.* contrasts the two as follows: "the solemn sacrifices promulgated by the sages cannot be accomplished by a poor man. Going to holy places confers merits and surpasses sacrifices". The Purāṇas are full of such sentiments and of eulogies of numerous tīrthas described in them. According to the list of tīrthas given by Kane, their number shot up to about 4,000 in medieval times.<sup>5</sup> In his opinion the literature on tīrthas is far more

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *The Indian Theogony*, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup>Upadhyay, G.P., 'The Origin and Function of Tirthas—Some Epic and Purāṇic Testimonies', *PIHC*, 1976, pp. 126-131; cf. also Bhardwaj, S.M., *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, Los Angeles, 1973, pp. 30-9.

<sup>3</sup>Nandi, R.N., 'Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brāhmaṇical Order', *The Indian Historical Review*, VI, pp. 103-9.

<sup>4</sup>Sharma, R.S., *op. cit.*, p. 236f.

<sup>5</sup>*HD*, V, p. 730-825.



extensive than on any other single topic of the Dharmaśāstra. In his very modest calculation there are atleast 40,000 verses on tīrthas in the epics and the Purāṇas.

### *Temple and Maṭha Organisation*

In the epic-Paurāṇika religion religious institutions such as temples, maṭhas, agrahāras, brahmadeyas, etc. played an important role. The hierarchical organisation of the Buddhist vihāras became more or less the model for such institutions. To some extent they assumed feudal character also. The impact of the temple organisation on the early Bhakti movement is yet to be worked out in detail, but after an in-depth study of the temple base of the Bhakti movement of South India, K. Veluthat<sup>1</sup> has drawn some interesting conclusions. He has shown that the leaders of the Tamil Bhakti movement were essentially leading a temple movement the centre of which shifted from Pallava to Chola territory. Secondly, the Nāyanārs and Ālvārs largely addressed their hymns to the deities consecrated in temples which shows the indebtedness of their ideology to this institutional base. Thirdly, the temples developed into the pivot round which the major economic, political and social activities of the locality revolved. Each temple was also a centre of learning, a place of entertainment and even a place of refuge. Fourthly, the temple was a landed magnate (and a big employer) in early medieval India. It also played the role of merchant guilds. Thus, the temples of the Paurāṇika age played a multidimensional role in society.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Veluthat, K., 'The Temple Base of the Bhakti Movement', *PIHC*, 1979, p. 184 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* Cf. also D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1975, pp. 395-405; Sharma, R. S., *Indian Feudalism*, Calcutta, 1965.

## Chapter 6

# Vaishnavism : Vishnu-Narayana and the Pancharatra

### *Names of the Sect*

The most important of the devotional Paurāṇika sects was Vaiṣṇavism, evidently named after Viṣṇu, also called Bhagavat, Nārāyaṇa, Hari, Vaikuṇṭha, etc. The *Padma Tantra*, a Pāñcharātra Saṁhitā, enumerates Sūri, Suhṛt, Bhāgavata, Sātvata, Pañchakālavit, Ekāntika, Tanmaya and Pāñcharātriya as the different names of this cult.<sup>1</sup> In this list the term Vaiṣṇava does not occur. Varāhamihira also uses the term Bhāgavata, and not Vaiṣṇava, to denote this system, and the imperial Guptas describe themselves in their inscriptions as Paramabhāgavatas. The *Mbh.* also uses the name Vaiṣṇava only in its latest sections. All these facts indicate that the Paurāṇika cult-name Vaiṣṇava had not been much in vogue even in the early centuries of the Christian era.

As regards the names enumerated in the *Padma Tantra*, Sātvata or Sātvata was one of the several names of the tribe to which Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa belonged. When his cult spread to other communities, the name of his tribe became a general designation of his worshippers. The words Ekāntin and Tanmaya were probably coined by the devotees of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva to emphasize their single minded (*ekāntika*) and devoted (*tanmaya*) attitude towards their deity.<sup>2</sup> Some distant connection of the term Sūri has been sought by D.C. Sircar with the Sūris of the *RV* (*supra*, p. 89) who aspired to have knowledge of the *paramapada* of the Vedic Viṣṇu, and the term Suhṛt probably alludes to Arjuna who was regarded as one of the closest friends (*suhṛt*) of

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *Purāṇic and Tāntric Religion*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jaiswal, Suvira, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, 1967, p. 40.

Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup> The worshippers of the latter were probably absorbed in the larger body of the Kṛṣṇa bhaktas (*infra*). The significance of the term Pāñchakālavit is not yet known but the names Pāñcharātra and Bhāgavata were undoubtedly authoritative designations of the cult. These are respectively connected with the pañcharātra sattra of Nārāyaṇa and the conception of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa as Bhagavat.

### *Viṣṇu in the Ṛgveda*

The etymology of the name Viṣṇu has been a matter of considerable speculation. M. Bloomfield and H. Oldenberg were inclined to explain it as 'crossing the back of the world or the earthly regions'. Bloch and other scholars believed the name to contain the suffix *snu* and the element *vi-* 'bird'. K. F. Johansson considers Viṣṇu almost identical with a large bird. R. N. Dandekar defends Bloch's view. However, Johansson's opinion, on which he relies, viz. that Viṣṇu originally was the sunbird, is regarded by J. Gonda as far from convincing. Przyluski feels that Viṣṇu, who has no counterpart in Indo-European mythology, was pre-Aryan.<sup>2</sup> According to S. K. Chatterji also the name Viṣṇu is of Dravidian origin being derived from the Dravida root *vin*.<sup>3</sup> However, the authors of Purāṇas made the word mean 'who enters or pervades (viz. the universe)' and J. Gonda finds much truth in this interpretation. "The frequency of the terms conveying the ideas of permeating and penetrating", he argues, "of distribution and spatial extensiveness, the identification with *virāj*—, i.e. the idea of extending far and wide, which is at the same time regarded as the totality or sum of all existence and often identified with *śrī*—or 'prosperity' point in the same direction as Viṣṇu's famous striding activity".<sup>4</sup>

Viṣṇu worship is as old as the *Ṛgveda*. In this text he is one of the Ādityas or manifestations of the Sun.<sup>5</sup> In a Ṛgvedic passage he is called the germ of 'order' or 'sacrifice'—*Ṛtasya garbham* (I. 156.3). He also figures as a leader in battle. He is

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sircar, D. C., 'Early History of Vaiṣṇavism', *CHI*, IV, pp. 108-145.

<sup>2</sup>For references, vide J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism (AEV)* Delhi, 1969, p. 4, n. 11.

<sup>3</sup>It is significant to note that on some of the Indus seals are depicted *chakra* and *svastika*, which in later ages became associated with Vaiṣṇavism.

<sup>4</sup>Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Shende, N. J., 'Viṣṇu as Āditya', *AIOC*, XX.

specially praised with Indra, the two being looked upon as rulers of the world (VI. 69; VII, 99). His greatness is described as inconceivable, and he is revered under the title 'Śipivishṭa' (VII. 100. 5-6) literally meaning 'bald'. His three strides, two called earthly and one, the highest, known only to himself (I.155.5), are his most important feat. Viṣṇu's highest place is the realm of the departed spirits (I.154.5-6; X.15.3) where he himself dwells. From this it is obvious that Viṣṇu was not a very important deity in the Early Vedic age. Keith is no doubt right in observing that denying to Viṣṇu the position of a great god in the period of the *RV* would be to forget that the comparative importance of the various gods is not necessarily fully brought out in this text. Ruben also suggests that Viṣṇu became a great god in post-Vedic times because a deity of his character and functions was already important in pre-Aryan India.<sup>1</sup> But even then it can hardly be denied that in the *RV* Viṣṇu is more concerned with sacrifice than devotion and does not belong to the category of the great deities. He was not regarded by anybody as the greatest God. His inferiority to Indra appears even in the *Sūktas* devoted to his own glorification. In *RV* I.22.19 his greatness rests on his being a worthy friend of Indra—*Indrasya yujyah sakhā*. The question therefore arises: how did a comparatively subordinate Vedic deity become the Supreme Being and the Lord of gods of the epic-Paurāṇika age?

#### *Factors in the Rise of Viṣṇu*

Scholars have answered this question variously. Hopkins opines that Viṣṇu's later popularity lay in the importance of his 'highest place or step', the home of the departed spirits where he himself is said to dwell. For L. Von Schroeder the secret of the victory and vitality of the triad Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Śiva consists in their representing the three main roots of religion and in the harmonious way in which they supplement each other. According to Gonda<sup>2</sup> however the ascendancy of Viṣṇu was a coming to the surface of the beliefs of those masses whose voice is but imperfectly heard in the *RV*. As we have ourselves seen<sup>3</sup>, the people of ancient India which

<sup>1</sup>*AEV*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>*RHAI*, I, Ch. 5.



were within the sphere of Aryan influence, varied from each other by different racial and social origins and beliefs and customs. The differences in the degree of their civilization, ethnically, locally and temporally, were reflected in the forms of their religion. We have also shown that the religion of the 'Aryan world' before coming into contact with the Austric and Dravidian people was not at all homogeneous. The concept of Vishṇu might have therefore originally belonged to a non-Vedic or partly Vedic community. But, as Gonda rightly observes, "all that has been said on this point is of a more or less speculative character and.....any effort to represent mere possibilities as certainty or even as an hypothesis must be distrusted".<sup>1</sup>

The Ṛgvedic Vishṇu lacked features which could be developed into the attributes of a major god. Not only is he a minor god with only a few hymns but his achievements have very little mythological potentiality. It is only in the Brāhmaṇas that his stature rises though even now he is far from being regarded by any section of the Aryan society as the only God. In a passage of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* he is called *Devānām dvārapaṇ* (I.30)—'the door-keeper of the gods', which can hardly be regarded as a complimentary epithet.<sup>2</sup> The doctrines of Bhakti and grace are also as yet unassociated with him. In the *Brāhmaṇas* he is more intimately connected with sacrifice than with devotion. Actually his association with yajña was one of the factors that led to his popularity in this period. As noted above, in the *RV* he is called the germ of sacrifice. The *Brāhmaṇas* never tire of repeating the formula : 'Vishṇu is sacrifice' or 'sacrifice is Vishṇu'. In the *AB*, where he is said to occupy the highest place among the gods, he is one of the '*Dīkshāpālau*'—the two guardians of the '*dīkshā*' or initiation (I.4). He protects the defects in the sacrifice (from producing any evil consequence), while Varuṇa protects the fruits arising from its successful performance (III. 38). After the Brāhmaṇical age Vishṇu needed no such prop, for he was already supreme. So the Epics and the Purāṇas repeat the Yajña-Vishṇu equation only rarely.

In the *RV* Vishṇu's fame rests on the three strides with which he crosses heaven (I.22.18). The *AB* version of the legend

<sup>1</sup>Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*EHVS*, p. 10.

mentions Indra also with whose help Vishṇu deludes the asuras and wins by his three strides the worlds, the Vedas and the Vāk. The Paurāṇika story of the three strides by which the Dwarf Vishṇu conquered the three worlds is anticipated in *IS* where the three places of Vishṇu are not, as in the *RV*, the two points of the horizon and the zenith, but the earth, the air, and the sky.<sup>1</sup> The *Śatapatha* relates this legend in detail. By the time of the Epics the three strides of Vishṇu had become an accepted myth. The *Mbh.* relates that when Vishṇu was taking the three strides he came upon the sage Bharadvāja who smote him on the chest with the water in his hand. It left a mark there. In the *Harivaṃśa* the myth is connected with the legend of Bali.

The legend of the three strides has been subjected to various interpretations. According to Wilson there can be little doubt that the three steps of Vishṇu are the three periods of the sun's course—his rise, culmination and setting.<sup>2</sup> Colebrooke thought that the taking of three steps might have formed the groundwork of the Paurāṇika legend of the Dwarf incarnation, but Raychaudhuri and Wilson find no allusion to the notion of avatāras in the Veda.<sup>3</sup> J. Gonda connects his three steps with his pervasiveness. "The universe being tripartite", he argues, "the act intimates, in a way, the god's universal character. All beings abide in these three steps".<sup>4</sup> According to S. Bhattacharji also the *MS* and *TS* seem to suggest that his three strides covered the three regions thus establishing his overlordship over the three regions.<sup>5</sup>

In the *RV* Vishṇu assists Indra in his encounters with asuras (*RV*, VII.99.4), particularly with Vṛtra. In the *Mbh.* and the Purāṇas Vishṇu appropriates many Indra myths. Now Indra becomes a subordinate divinity who can maintain his position only through the grace of Vishṇu. In the Epics and Purāṇas Vishṇu's war-like activities also become more prominent. In the *Rāmā.* he is a mighty warrior who killed Tāraka. In the Purāṇas however Tāraka is killed by Kārttikeya. Vishṇu also killed Hiranyakaśipu.

<sup>1</sup>Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Chaubey, B.B., 'Vishṇu and His Three Strides', *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, Vrindavan, X, No. 3-4, 1965, pp. 81-85.

<sup>3</sup>*EHVS*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Gonda, *AEV*, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup>Bhattacharji, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

Namuchi, Kālanemi, Rādheya, Hārdikya, Śumbha and Niśumbha. In the *Mbh.* he kills Madhu and Kaiṭabha, Hiraṇyāksha and Hiraṇyakaśipu.

Viṣṇu's solar identity is clear from the Ṛgvedic hymns. Of him the *ŚB* also says : 'he who is this sacrifice is yonder Āditya'. The *Mait. Upa.* (VI.16) describes him as the one who shines in the yonder orb. The *AV* invokes him to give heat, thus proving his solar character. The *ŚB* says that Viṣṇu's head was cut off and became the sun. In the epic-Paurāṇika age also his solar association was kept in mind. In the *Mbh.* Bhīṣma praises Kṛṣṇa, an avatāra of Viṣṇu, as the sun. In the *HV* he is called the lord of the Ādityas. The list of the Ādityas varies from text to text, but Viṣṇu is included in all of them. In the *HV* Ghaṇṭākarma eulogises Viṣṇu as 'the brilliance of the sun'. His orb is the sun by day and the moon by night, says the *HV*.<sup>1</sup>

Viṣṇu's solar antecedents are also clear from his association with chakra and Garuḍa. The Vedic and epic-Paurāṇika Viṣṇu's distinctive weapon was the disc or wheel, the chakra. The *RV* mentions it and there it undoubtedly stands for the solar disc. The Vedas do not know Garuḍa although they do mention the 'divya suparna' (the divine bird). This bird steals or carries Soma. The Soma-stealing suparna becomes, in later mythology, the amṛta-stealing Garuḍa. Garuḍa became Viṣṇu's mount as well ensign. Garuḍa lived on the snakes. Their struggle is a symbolic representation of the struggle between the solar deity and his nāga adversary.<sup>2</sup> Thus Garuḍa, the mount of Viṣṇu, becomes a form of Viṣṇu himself, just as the bull is a form of Śiva.

### *The Concept of Nārāyaṇa*

The predominance of the Viṣṇu element in the Vaiṣṇava religion was a later development.<sup>3</sup> In the beginning Nārāyaṇa was the more prominent deity. Though both Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa are regarded as one and the same in the *Baudhāyana DS*, the *TA*,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 25 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Kṛṣṇa's victory over Kāliya serpent and Viṣṇu's description as sleeping over Śeṣanāga.

<sup>3</sup>*Supra.* In the *Mbh.* the term Vaiṣṇava occurs only thrice and that too in a late passage. Similarly the Epic generally refers to Nārāyaṇa, his other name Viṣṇu being comparatively rare.

several passages of the *Mbh.*, and the later Paurāṇika literature, yet originally they were names of different deities. Nārāyaṇa is mentioned for the first time in two passages of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. In the first, by means of sacrifice he places himself in all the worlds, the gods, the Vedas, the vital airs, etc. and all things are placed in him. The other passage states that by performing the pāñcharātrasattra Nārāyaṇa gained superiority over all beings, and 'became all beings'. The Purushasūkta is said to his litany. Obviously, already in the age of the *ŚB* Nārāyaṇa was a deity of eminence.

According to some scholars Nārāyaṇa is a gotra name derived from Nara.<sup>1</sup> It means that originally Nārāyaṇa was a deified sage or leader of thought born in the family of another sage Nara. Both of them were advocates of solar worship, which led to their identification with the Sun-god Viṣṇu. Against this it has been objected that (a) in the *Mbh.* the sage Nara is born out of the austerities performed by Nārāyaṇa, and not *vice versa*; (b) there is no evidence to show that Nara or Nārāyaṇa ever preached solar worship; and (c) the *Śatapatha*, which is the earliest source to mention Nārāyaṇa, speaks of him as a god and not a human being (cf. the statement 'he became all beings'). The argument of S.N. Dasgupta<sup>2</sup> that the human character of Nārāyaṇa is implied in the passage which states that Nārāyaṇa gained transcendence and immanence after celebrating the pāñcharātra sacrifice, "does not stand scrutiny, for even Prajāpati-Brahmā and Brahmā-Svayambhū are described as having acquired their powers through sacrifice in this work, and the divine character of these deities can hardly be questioned".<sup>3</sup>

According to another theory Nārāyaṇa was a deity of Dravidian origin.<sup>4</sup> His name may be derived from the three Dravidian words *nār-ay-an*. The first is equated with Dravidian *nīr* meaning water, *ay* means 'to lie in a place', while *an* is a Dravidian personal termination. But Suvira Jaiswal rightly points out that this view is based on the unproved presumption that the name Nārāyaṇa must refer to the conception of the deity as lying on waters.

<sup>1</sup>Barnett, *The Hindu Gods and Heroes*, pp. 6-8; Sircar in *AIU*, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup>Dasgupta, S.N., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, III, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Jaiswal, Suvira, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, New Delhi, 1967, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>Kenny, L. B., *ABORI*, XXIII, pp. 250-6.



Following R.G. Bhandarkar,<sup>1</sup> Suvira Jaiswal has herself explained the origin of the concept of Nārāyaṇa with the help of the Udyogaparvan and of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* which state that the godhead is the refuge of all men, and so he is known as Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa means the place where *narāḥ* go. The intrinsic and inseparable relation of Nārāyaṇa with Nara, the Man, she argues, gave rise to the myth of Nara and Nārāyaṇa being constant associates and companions. It is further indicated by the ŚB which identifies him with Puruṣa, the Primeval Man, and describes him as Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa. It narrates that Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa conceived the idea of the pañcharātrasattra with a desire to overpass all beings and become everything and his five-days sacrificial session is described as the Puruṣamedha, the immolation of man. "If Nārāyaṇa signified the collectivity of man, it was for the good of the whole tribe that a human being was killed, originally to provide food for the entire community of men, and later for ritual purposes".<sup>2</sup>

The conception of Nārāyaṇa as a god embodying the whole universe was, S. Jaiswal opines, a logical development from the earlier meaning denoting 'the dwelling-place or a resort of collection of men'. The idea of the viśvarūpa of the deity popularised by the *Gītā* might have also been originally associated with Nārāyaṇa. The Āraṇyakaparvan of the *Mbh.* describes the myth of sage Mārkaṇḍeya's entry into the mouth of Nārāyaṇa and his vision of the whole universe as existing inside the body of the god. It may be a prototype of the cosmic form of the deity shown to Arjuna in the *Gītā*.<sup>3</sup>

Nārāyaṇa is sometimes identified with Prajāpati-Brahmā. In its account of creation the *Manusmṛti* identifies him with Brahmā.

<sup>1</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>2</sup>Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 35. We, however, do not agree with her opinion that Nārāyanabali, mentioned in some Gṛhyasūtras, was a remnant of some earlier ritual in which human beings were offered to Nārāyaṇa, because according to our texts it was performed for those who died unnatural death. We also do not agree with her interpretation of the title *bhagavat* (*op. cit.*, p. 37 ff.) and also with the suggestion that it originally belonged to Nārāyaṇa.

<sup>3</sup>Jaiswal, S., *op. cit.*, p. 36. It is more probable that it is an imitation of the cosmic form conceived in the *Gītā*.

The creation myths of the *Vāyu P.* also identify the two deities at several places. In a passage of this Purāṇa, Brahmā in answer to a question of god Viṣṇu explains that he is Nārāyaṇa, the creator of the world. The *Viṣṇu P.* mentions Brahmā as one who is known as Nārāyaṇa. The *Brahmāṇḍa P.* identifies Brahmā and Nārāyaṇa at three places, and the *Mārkaṇḍeya* speaks of him as Brahmā's own form. Later, when the popularity and prestige of Nārāyaṇa reached its peak, Brahmā became a subordinate divinity, who is produced out of the greatest of gods and stands on his navel.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Nārāyaṇa in the Mahābhārata*

The *Mbh.* gives several different accounts of Nārāyaṇa. In some passages he is called an ancient ṛshi, the son of Dharma, commonly connected with Nara. Nara and Nārāyaṇa are usually identified with Arjuna and Vāsudeva. In *Mbh.* V. 48-49 Brahmā tells gods about Nara and Nārāyaṇa who had come from the world men to the world of Brahmā. Worshipped by the gods and the gandharvas they exist for the destruction of the asuras. Indra obtained the boon that they would assist him in the battle against demons. In *Mbh.* VII. 200. 57-8 it is said that for some purpose the Creator of the universe took birth as Nārāyaṇa, the son of Dharma and underwent austerities for thousands of years. Śiva granted him boon that nobody, even Śiva himself, should ever be able to withstand his prowess. Nārāyaṇa then walked over the earth as Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. From his austerities was born a great muni Nara, who was equal to Nārāyaṇa himself. Arjuna was none else than that Nara. The two Ṛshis take birth in every Yuga for the benefit of the world. Elsewhere the *Mbh.* states that in the Kṛta Age Nārāyaṇa took birth as the son of Dharma in a quadruple form, namely Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and the self-create Kṛṣṇa. Amongst them all, Nara and Nārāyaṇa underwent the severest austerities by repairing to a Himalayan retreat. Later, Nārāyaṇa took away *amṛta* from the asuras and made Garuḍa his vehicle and emblem.

In the *Mbh.* the ancient sage Nārāyaṇa is also identified with the sage Kapila of old. This identification was perhaps due to the influence of Bhāgavatism in which Kapila was regarded as the fifth incarnation of Viṣṇu.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48 f.

In the episode of the Śvetadvīpa Nārāyaṇa is the name of the god of the White Islanders (*Mbh.* XII. 336.27-55). "On the northern shores of the ocean of milk there is an island of great splendour called by the name of White Island. The men that inhabit that island have complexion as white as the rays of the moon and are devoted to Nārāyaṇa". "Incapable of being seen, in consequence of his dazzling effulgence, that illustrious deity can be beheld only by those persons that in course of long ages succeed in devoting themselves wholly and solely to Him".<sup>1</sup>

### Meaning of Pāñcharātra

Pāñcharātra as a name of the devotees of Nārāyaṇa occurs for the first time in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* which also speaks of Nārāyaṇa as Pañcharātrika. Obviously the epithet should mean the performer of the pañcharātra sacrifice mentioned in the *ŚB* and this suggests the source from which the name of his devotees is derived. The Pañcharātra Saṁhitās themselves do not agree about the real meaning of the word. According to the *Nārada Pāñcharātra*, *rātra* means knowledge (*rātram cha jñānavachanam*) hence Pāñcharātra is a system which deals five kinds of knowledge (*jñānam pañcha vidham smṛtam*)—of ontology (*tattva*), liberation (*muktiprada*), devotion (*bhaktiprada*), yoga (*yaugika*), and senses (*vaishayika*). The *Īśvara Saṁhitā* relates that the religion was taught by Nārāyaṇa to five sages, Śaṇḍilya, Aupagāyana, Mauñjāyana, Kauśika and Bhāradvāja, in five successive days and nights. Hence it became known as Pāñcharātra. The *Śrī-Praśna Saṁhitā* states that *rātri* means nescience (*ajñānam*) and *pañcha* is derived from the root *pach* to cook or to destroy. Hence Pāñcharātra is the system which destroys ignorance. According to the *Padma Tantra* the system is so named because it dispels other five systems which are Yoga, Sāṁkhya, Buddhism, Jainism and Pāśupata. The *Śaktisaṁgama Tantra* however believes that the Pāñcharātras are designated as such because they observe a vow which enjoins them not to see a Śaiva for five successive nights.<sup>2</sup>

Some other texts have suggested that the Pāñcharātra is so

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Raychaudhuri, H.C., *EHVS*, p. 68. For details of the Nārāyaṇīya section vide Ch. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Bhatt, S.R., *The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra—An Advaitic Approach*, Delhi, pp. 2-5.



called because the four Vedas and Sāṃkhya are combined in it (*Nārāyaṇīya*), or because it compares the five mahābhūtas which embody the soul with five nights (*Agni Purāṇa* and *Parama Saṃhitā*) or because it dwells upon five sacraments (namely *tapa*, *pundra*, *nāma*, *mantra* and *yoga*) or because it advocates five modes of worship (*abhigamana*, *upādāna*, *ijyā*, *svādhyāya* and *yoga*), or because it shows reverence to the five Vṛshṇi heroes—Saṅkarshṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Sāmba and Aniruddha.<sup>1</sup>

As the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā* is one of the earliest Pāñcharātra texts, many scholars such as F. Otto Schrader, Kumarappa, B. Bhattacharya, etc. accept the explanation of the term given in it as the most authentic.<sup>2</sup> According to it the system which recognises the fivefold forms of the deity, namely the *para* (transcendent) *vyūha* (emanatory), *vibhava* (incarnatory), *antaryāmin* (immanent) and *archā* (that which resides in idols and images) forms, is known as Pāñcharātra. But the *Nārāyaṇīya*, the earliest text to mention this cult, shows no acquaintance with the theory of the five forms of the deity. It appears to be a later systematisation when the Pāñcharātra philosophy had achieved a high degree of development.

According to Suvira Jaiswal the confusion about the true and initial meaning of the term has been caused by ignoring the obvious. She argues that the *ŚB* clearly states that the Pāñcharātra-sattra of Nārāyaṇa was a human-sacrifice which lasted for five days (as the duration of the sacrifice was counted from the previous night, the word *rātra* is used). In the *Vaitāna Sūtra* of the *Atharva-veda* also the human-sacrifice is a five-day performance.<sup>3</sup> This view agrees well with the theory that the Pāñcharātra sect originated in the non-Vedic milieu.

### *Relation of Pāñcharātra with the Vedic Tradition*

There has been a keen controversy over the question as to whether the Pāñcharātra is Vedic or non-Vedic in origin and pro-Vedic or anti-Vedic in attitude. Some Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstra writers maintain that there are basic differences between the Vedas and the Pāñcharātra, and that the Pāñcharātra is non-Vedic in origin and

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* Cf. also Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 41 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 42 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 44.



anti-Vedic in attitude, and hence deserves condemnation<sup>1</sup> while a long array of Śrī Vaiṣṇava and later Pāñcharātra writers make strenuous efforts to disprove the charge of unorthodoxy against it.<sup>2</sup> For example Yāmunāchārya refutes it vehemently in his *Āgama Prāmānya*. But strangely enough these āchāryas regard the Vedas sometimes as the root and sometimes the shoots of the Pāñcharātra.<sup>3</sup> S.N. Dasgupta believes that the Pāñcharātra doctrines are associated with the Purushasūkta of the *RV* and the *ŚB*<sup>4</sup> while S.R. Bhatt thinks that except the philosophical portion, which is borrowed from the Upanishads and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the major part of the Pāñcharātra literature is patently non-Vedic.<sup>5</sup> The anti-Vedic attitude of the Pāñcharātra is manifest at some places where Vedas are regarded as inferior to the Pāñcharātra. According to Suvira Jaiswal also as opposed to the Bhāgavatas, who had accepted the Brāhmaṇical social order, the Pāñcharātras were indifferent to and were perhaps against it.<sup>6</sup> It is also generally accepted that the Pāñcharātras had prominent Tāntrika leanings and Tāntrikism, on the whole, was more popular with the lower non-Vedic classes. In order to give a Vedic basis for themselves the Pāñcharātra texts themselves trace the origin of their system from the Ekāyana Śākhā of the *RV* mentioned in the *Chhāndogya Upa*.<sup>7</sup> But the assumption of any connection between the Ekāyana and the Pāñcharātra is

<sup>1</sup>The *Kūrma P.* calls it contrary to the Śruti and Smṛti. The *Skanda, Sāmba, Varāha* and *Parāśara Purāṇas* are of the same opinion. Some state that Śiva composed the Pāñcharātra Saṃhitās to delude the degraded. Bhattoji Dikshita has culled verses from *Vasishṭha, Liṅga* and *Skanda Purāṇas* to prove the anti-Vedic nature of the Pāñcharātra.

<sup>2</sup>The *Viṣṇu, Bhāgavata, Nāradiya, Garuḍa* and *Padma Purāṇas*, and the *Vasishṭha, Harīta, Vyāsa, Jamadgni, Parāśara* and *Kaśyapa Smṛtis* regard the Pāñcharātra as Vedic.

<sup>3</sup>Some Smṛtis and Purāṇas divide the Pāñcharātra literature into Śrauta and Aśrauta parts and discard only the latter. Cf. Bhatta, Siddhesvara, 'Relation of Vaidika and Pāñcharātra Currents of Thought in the Smṛti Period', *NPP*, 69, No. 3, pp. 403-14.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Bhatt, S.R., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup>The *Mbh.* states that the Ekāyana path leads one to Hṛṣhikeśa (Kṛṣṇa). The *Īśvara Saṃhitā* says that the Ekāyana denotes the worship of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva.

generally regarded as quite baseless.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of a *Mbh.* passage also it is held by Hazra that the Pāñcharātra was originally non-Vedic and that it was later made consistent with the Vedic teachings.<sup>2</sup>

### *Doctrines of the Pāñcharātra*

The earliest available record of the Pāñcharātra ideology is contained in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* which, according to F. Otto Schrader, does not give an impression of being based on first-hand knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Apart from the Nārāyaṇīya we find its exposition in the literature variously named as the Pāñcharātra Upanishads, Pāñcharātra Tantras, Pāñcharātra Āgamas,<sup>4</sup> and the Pāñcharātra Saṁhitās, a major portion of which is now lost. According to Schrader once their bulk amounted to not less than one and a half million ślokas. Traditionally, 108 Saṁhitās are mentioned. Schrader enumerates 215 and suggests that there may be many more. The *Lakshmī Tantra* gives the number as 219.

The teachings of the Pāñcharātra school,<sup>5</sup> and in general of the whole Āgama literature, may be divided into four sections. (i) *Jñāna* : philosophical doctrines regarding God, Nature, individual soul; process of creation, means of liberation, etc. (ii) *Yoga* : meditation or concentration to obtain release. (iii) *Kriyā* : rules to be followed in the making of idols and in the construction and consecration of temples. And (iv) *Charyā* : rules of conduct regarding worship, rites, festivals and social duties.

<sup>1</sup>Contra, Chakravarti, A.C., 'Doctrine of Ekāyana', *JAIH*, I, pp. 99-104.

<sup>2</sup>Hazra, *Purāṇic Records*, p. 199 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Schrader, F. Otto, quoted by S.R. Bhatt, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>The word Āgama is derived from the root *gam* with prefix *ā* meaning 'that which has come' or 'that which has been revealed'. The Āgamika religion branched off into three schools—Vaishṇava, Śaiva and Śākta—whose devotees believe that their Āgamas were 'revealed' by their respective deities. Some texts, however, explain it differently (cf. Bhatt, S.R., *The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra—An Advaitic Approach*, p. 14, n. 2). The *Śabdakalpadrūma* enumerates the chief characteristics of the Āgamas. The followers of the Āgamas call them *Śruti* and regard them as equally or even more authoritative than the Vedas (*ibid.*, p. 19, n. 34).

<sup>5</sup>Madhavan, 'Pāñcharātra Saṁhitās and their Philosophy', *Vedānta Kesari*, LI, No. 10, 1965, p. 504 ff.

The Pāñcharātra philosophy in the *Nārāyaṇīya* (cf. Ch. 7) is comparatively simpler than what it is in the *Samhitās*. The philosophy of the *Nārāyaṇīya* is a combination of Upanishadic monism, proto-Sāṃkhya dualism, proto-yoga mysticism, along with the popular worship of a personal God in an ardently devotional spirit, with all the paraphernalia of mythological fancy.<sup>1</sup> In the *Samhitā* literature the primary concern of the Pāñcharātras is *sādhana* or the practical method (*kriyā* and *charyā*) of realising the Ultimate Reality.

The Pāñcharātra school believes in one Ultimate Non-dual Reality which possesses in its fundamental nature two aspects, viz., static (*nivṛtti*) and dynamic (*pravṛtti*) represented respectively by Brahman and its Śakti. In the description of the former we find an unmistakable influence of the Advaitika tendency, and in the latter that of Sāṃkhya. From this S.R. Bhatt concludes that the philosophy of the Pāñcharātra school is much nearer to Advaita than to Viśiṣṭādvaita.<sup>2</sup>

The most dominant element and a notable feature of the Pāñcharātra *Samhitās* seems to be the prevalence of Tāntrikism. The *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* is full of the Tāntrika lore. It clearly declares that the Pāñcharātra is based partly on the Tāntrika system. It believes in the *guhya* nature of the mantras and regards the world as created through them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bhatt, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

## Chapter 7

# Vaishnavism : Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Bhagavatism

### *Divine Vāsudeva was Distinct from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva*

Bhāgavatism was perhaps the most important current of Vaishṇavism. It was the authoritative name of the cult centering round the Sātvata chief Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. It gave new orientation and imparted great strength to Vaishṇavism. Indian scholars generally subscribe to the thesis of H.C. Raychaudhari<sup>1</sup> that Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva and hero of the Sātvata sept of the Yādavas, was apotheosised by his tribe which popularised his cult. We also admit that Kṛṣṇa of the Sātvata tribe has been mentioned as Vāsudeva in such pre-Christian works as the *Ghaṭa Jātaka*, the *Mahābhāṣya*, the early portions of the *Mbh.* and the *Gītā*. The Vāsudeva of Pāṇini mentioned in a *dvadva* compound with Arjuna (*supra*, p. 96, n. 3) should also be identified with Kṛṣṇa. The Ghosundi, Besnagar and the Nanaghat inscriptions of the pre-Christian period which mention Vāsudeva, sometimes with Saṅkarshaṇa, also prove that it was Kṛṣṇa, the brother of Saṅkarshaṇa, who was worshipped as Vāsudeva. All the same, there appears to be some evidence to suggest that the worship of a divinity named Vāsudeva was prevalent even before the advent of the Kṛṣṇa cult. D.C. Sircar<sup>2</sup> dismisses this evidence by suggesting that the Pāñcharātras invented the myth of a supreme Vāsudeva other than Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, in order to absolve their deity of the misdeeds attributed to the latter in the *Mbh.* etc. We fail to agree with him. For, how could the belief in a Divine Vāsudeva absolve their

<sup>1</sup>*EHVS*, p. 36 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*AIU*, p. 440.



deity Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva of the misdeeds which his critics attributed to him unless the followers of Bhāgavatism adopted the position that their object of worship was Divine Vāsudeva and not Kṛṣṇa?

The possibility of a distinction between Divine Vāsudeva and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was probably first suggested by A. Govindacharya Swamin, and was accepted *mutatis mutandis* by Charles Elliot, R.G. Bhandarkar and some others.<sup>1</sup> The *Padma Tantra*, a Pāñcharātra text, lays down that the image of the son of Vāsudeva should be made like that of the god Vāsudeva. Patañjali distinguishes between Divine Vāsudeva and Kṣatriya Vāsudeva (*infra*). Further, the Bhāgavatas themselves derive the word Vāsudeva not from Vasudeva but from the root *vas*, 'to dwell' meaning thereby that Vāsudeva is one 'who dwells in all beings.'<sup>2</sup> A verse of the *Vishṇu P.*<sup>3</sup> clearly differentiates between Divine Vāsudeva and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, for it states that a part of the god Vāsudeva is established in a twofold manner in the persons of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva.<sup>4</sup> The vyūha doctrine (when it differentiates *para* Vāsudeva from Vyūha Vāsudeva) also implicitly admits the difference between Divine Vāsudeva and its emanation. Above all the *Mbh.* story of Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva, who contested the claim of Kṛṣṇa for the status of true Vāsudeva,<sup>5</sup> cannot be explained by any supposition other than that the worship of Divine Vāsudeva was prevalent even before the time of Kṛṣṇa and that Kṛṣṇa and Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva both claimed to be his avatāras, and in the struggle that followed the Vṛṣṇi hero emerged victorious.<sup>6</sup>

### *Was Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa a Solar or Vegetation Deity?*

However it must be conceded that Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva,

<sup>1</sup>Swamin, A. Govindacharya, *JRAS*, 1911, p. 936; Eliot, Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, London, 1921, p. 154; Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 15 f.; Chaturvedi, Parsuram, *Vaiṣṇava Dharma*, Delhi, p. 21; Gonda, J., *AEV*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Jaiswal, S., *op. cit.*, p. 63; cf. *Vishṇu P.*, I. 2. 12; *Mbh.* V. 70. 3; XII. 328. 36; XII. 341. 41.

<sup>3</sup>*Vishṇu P.*, V. 17. 26 (Wilson's ed., p. 431 f.).

<sup>4</sup>Jaiswal, S., *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup>*Mbh.* III. 14.8; *HV*, III. 91; *Vishṇu P.*, V. 34. For other references see *ABORI*, X, p. 316.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Studies in Early Kṛṣṇa Worship,' *Bias in Indian Historiography*, ed. by Devahuti, New Delhi, pp. 120-38.

has become so completely identified with Divine Vāsudeva that the popular mind is not usually ready to entertain the notion of a difference between the two.<sup>1</sup> But the Kṛṣṇa saga itself is a conglomeration of several heterogeneous elements.<sup>2</sup> He is a warrior, a politician, a preacher, a child-god of some pastoral tribe and a love-god of the popular lore, all rolled into one (cf. p. 99). The diversity of his character has been noticed by a large number of scholars. But whether he was a historical personage or a mythical figure, has been a highly controversial question. On the strength of some late legends several scholars have concluded that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva was not a human being, but a popular deity whose cult was foisted upon Viṣṇu. For example, Barth considers Kṛṣṇa to be a solar deity.<sup>3</sup> Against this Keith<sup>4</sup> objects: "His name tells seriously against it; the 'dark sun' requires more explanation than it seems likely to receive". Keith himself found in Kṛṣṇa a development from one of those vegetation deities that seem to have been so widely worshipped.<sup>5</sup> But Kṛṣṇa's connection with cattle is no proof that he was a vegetation deity. The Yamunā region, the scene of Kṛṣṇa's childhood, was famous for its cattle wealth even in the Ṛgvedic age (RV, V.52.17). "May the seven times seven all-potent Maruts, (aggregated as) a single troop bestow upon me hundreds (of cattle): may I possess wealth of cows, renowned upon (the banks of) the Yamunā." A Gobala of Vṛṣṇi tribe is mentioned as a teacher in the TS (III, 11.9.3) and the *Jaiminīya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa* (I, 6.1). Kṛṣṇa's names Govinda, Gopāla, Gopendra, etc., may really be connected with the epithet *gopā* meaning

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Betai, Ramesh Chandra, S., 'Place of Śrīkṛṣṇa in the Realm of Indian History and Culture', *JGJRI*, XIX, 1962-3, pp. 159-66.

<sup>2</sup>For a review of the modern interpretations of the life of Kṛṣṇa, vide Majumdar, B.B., *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, Calcutta, 1969, Ch. VI, pp. 233-65.

<sup>3</sup>Barth, *Religion of India*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>*JRAS*, 1908, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>J. Kennedy believed that Kṛṣṇa was a semi-aboriginal deity (*JRAS*, 1908, p. 506). D.D. Kosambi (*Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962, p. 26) opines, on the basis of a drawing of *chakra* in a Mirzapur cave of about 800 B.C., that Kṛṣṇa was an aborigin. He thinks that the *Gītā* should be regarded as an interpolation in the *Mbh.* because Kṛṣṇa, as he appears in the *Mbh.*, is singularly ill-suited to propound any moral doctrine.

‘protector of cows’<sup>1</sup> or ‘herdsman’<sup>2</sup> applied in the *RV* (I.22.18) to Viṣṇu. According to the *RV* (I, 154.6) the highest step of Viṣṇu is the dwelling of the ‘many horned swiftly moving cows’. Raychaudhuri therefore opines that Kṛṣṇa’s connection with cattle may be a historical trait, or an imposition of a feature of the personality of Viṣṇu.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Sources for the Life-History of Kṛṣṇa*

For the life of Kṛṣṇa our main sources are : (1) the *Chhāndyoga Upa.*; (2) the incidental notices in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali; (3) the Buddhist *Ghaṭa Jātaka* and the Jaina *Uttarādhyaṇa Sūtra*, and (4) the *Mbh.*, the *HV*, the Purāṇas and the sectarian Upanishads. But to construct the life of Kṛṣṇa with the help of the *HV* or the Purāṇas or the sectarian Upanishads, which in their present shape are obviously separated by an interval of many centuries, probably more than a thousand years, from his time (*infra*, p. 179) is obviously not possible. The evidence of the *Mbh.* also needs to be used with much caution. “Though certain parts of the poem are undoubtedly old and contain genuine historical tradition, yet the date of the work as a whole is not far removed from the age of the Purāṇas; and it is not always easy to separate the kernel of the epic from the husk”. The Jātakas and the Jaina Sūtras are in no sense historical records and stories preserved in them have the stamp of being twisted by the Buddhists and Jainas for their sectarian purposes. The *Ghaṭa Jātaka* gives a garbled version of the life of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. According to it Vāsudeva and his brothers were the sons of Kaṁsa’s sister Devagabbhā and her husband Upasāgara. These sons were handed over to a man named Andhakaveṇhu and his wife Nandagopā, an attendant of Devagabbhā. The *Uttarādhyaṇa Sūtra* mentions Vāsudeva as Keśava, and describes him as one of the sixty-three Śalākāpuruṣas and a contemporary of Arisṭanemi, the 22nd Tīrthaṅkara, both of whom were princes of the town of Soriyapura (Śauryapura). Keśava’s parents were Vasudeva and Devakī,

<sup>1</sup>Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, I, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>*EHVS*, p. 28.



Arishtanemi's were king Samudravijaya and Śivā. The story told in the text is a confused one, but Keśava-Vāsudeva's dynastic association is correctly reported.

As regards the *Mahābhāshya*, it no doubt contains important hints (*infra*), but being post-Buddhistic its value is considerably less than that of the *Chhāndogya Upa*. It is from the last work that we can hope to get the most authentic information regarding the founder of the Bhāgavata religion.<sup>1</sup> But before we analyse the evidence of our sources on the life of Kṛṣṇa it will be better if we delineate the life-history of the epic-Paurāṇika Kṛṣṇa in brief.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Outline of the Life-History of epic-Paurāṇika Kṛṣṇa*

In the *Mbh.* and the Purāṇas Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva plays the double role of a not overscrupulous chief of Yādava-Vṛshṇi-Sātvata tribe of Mathurā and a deified teacher and preacher of the *Gītā* and the *Anugītā*. The Sātvatas or Vṛshṇis were a famous people in the Brāhmaṇic age, and had produced at least one teacher of repute (Gobala Vārshṇa) in the early Vedic times. According to the *Arthasāstra* of Kauṭilya the Vṛshṇis were a *saṅgha* or 'corporation'. Their political constitution was therefore probably similar to that of the Śākyas among whom Gautama the Buddha was born. The name of Kṛṣṇa's father was Vasudeva according to the *Mbh.* and the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, Vasudeva Ānakadundubhi according to the Purāṇas and Upasāgara according to the *Ghaṭa Jātaka*.<sup>3</sup> The name of his mother was certainly Devakī. The existence of a brother named Baladeva or Saṅkarshaṇa (born of Rohiṇī) is vouched for by all the authorities. The story of his supernatural birth are too well-known to need any repetition. The *Mbh.* does not much dwell upon his early life. It is the *Harivaṁśa* and other Purāṇas which give us details about his life as an infant and a cowboy of Vraja. In the *HV* he kills the ass Dhenuka, the bull-demon Arishta (II. 20) and the horse-demon Keśin (II. 24). He destroys the twin Arjuna trees

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Many scholars use the *Indica* of Megasthenes also for this purpose. We however feel that Heracles of Mathurā mentioned in the *Indica* cannot be identified with Kṛṣṇa (*infra*, p. 180 ff.).

<sup>3</sup>*EHVS*, p. 44.



(Yamalārjuna), slays demon Pralamba, kills the monstress Pūtānā (II. 23), the elephant-demon Kuvalāyapīḍā (II. 29) and the demon Chāṇūra (while Balarāma kills Mushṭika (II. 30). He tears the rope with which he was bound and hence was called Dāmodara (II. 27). He also fought and subjugated the serpent Kālīya. However his greatest deed was killing of Kāṁsa (III. 128).<sup>1</sup>

Kṛṣṇa tells his tribe that Indra was the god of cultivators and not of the nomadic shepherds for whom cattle and mountains were proper objects of worship; so they ought to offer sacrifice to mount Govardhana instead of to Indra. Nanda and others did as they were bidden by him. This greatly annoyed Indra, who ordered his attendant clouds to afflict the cattle of the shepherds with rain and wind. But with the help of Kṛṣṇa the cowherds overcame this calamity.

Kṛṣṇa fought and defeated Jvara in Bāṇa's capital Śoṇitapura and cut off Bāṇa's thousand arms. In his youth he won many a bride, besides Rukmīṇī (HV, II. 60. 36; II. 41-3). Besides them we hear of the innumerable cow-herdresses (*gopīs*) with whom he was in love (HV, II. 20). In the Purāṇas we are introduced to Rādhā as his favourite cowherdess (Vāyu P., 104.52). In the *Bhāgavata P. gopīvallabha* side of Kṛṣṇa's character receives greater attention.

The Kṛṣṇa saga had come into existence in its fully developed form—barring probably the Rādhā element but including the *gopīvallabha* aspect of his personality—by the Gupta age. The Mandasor inscription of 404 A.D. states that with the coming of the rainy season, the festival of Indra began as it was then (i.e. in the past) allowed by Kṛṣṇa.<sup>2</sup> It obviously refers to the Govardhana episode in which after subduing Indra Kṛṣṇa allowed his worship to continue. The Tusam rock inscription of the fifth century A.D. describes Viṣṇu as a mighty bee on the waterlily which is the face of Jāmbavatī<sup>3</sup>. Jāmbavatī, the mother of Sāmba, was one of the queens of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, and the inscription proves complete identification of Viṣṇu with Kṛṣṇa. The *Jayākhyā Saṁhitā* eulogises Kṛṣṇa in the form of a child, Kālidāsa refers to Viṣṇu in the form of a *gopa* and the *Mudrārākṣha* describes Keśava as the Keśinisūdana. In the

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *op. cit.*, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālīna Abhilekha*, Meerut, 1984, p. 341 f.

<sup>3</sup>Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 269.

Pahadpur sculptures of the Gupta period Kṛṣṇa's gopikāvilāsa is depicted. Bhāsa in his *Bālacharita* gives an account of the erotic sports of Kṛṣṇa, and Bhāsa belongs to the early centuries A.D. The *Vishṇu P.* also depicts Kṛṣṇa's amorous dalliances.

### *Amalgamation of Human and Mythical Elements in the Kṛṣṇa Saga*

From the above account it is obvious that the personality of Kṛṣṇa<sup>1</sup> as revealed in the *Mbh.* and the Purāṇas is a composite one. He appears to have been a historical personage; if the Mahābhārata episode, in whatever form, was a historical fact, Kṛṣṇa must also be regarded as a historical person. He was obviously a warrior and also a religious teacher—the evidence of the *Chhândogya* discussed below proves his existence as a religious thinker. His human character is also manifest in the *Ghaṭa Jātaka* and the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*. The view that he was a human teacher, not an entirely mythical or legendary person, has been admitted by some of the greatest scholars including R.G. Bhandarkar, B.N. Seal, Bühler, Grierson, Macnicol, Raychaudhuri, B.B. Majumdar and Pusalker. We also concur with this belief.

However it is also obvious that in the epic-Paurāṇika age the personality of Kṛṣṇa was rendered complex by his identification with the divine Vāsudeva, his recognition as an avatāra of Viṣṇu, the super-imposition of a large number of legends and myths some of which were even pre-epical and pre-Upanishadic in origin, the victory of Bhāgavatism over some rival sects giving birth to a large number of stories which were foisted upon his personality, his identification with a child-god and an amorous god, and so on. It is an extremely difficult task indeed to separate the various layers of the tradition so that the gradual evolution of the Kṛṣṇa saga may be understood.

### *Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra of the Chhândogya Upanishad*

Let us begin our investigation with the analysis of the *Chhândogya* tradition about Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra in which his humanity is most explicit. The *Chhândogya* is one of the oldest and

<sup>1</sup>For the different meanings of the term *Kṛṣṇa* vide Sarma, M.V. Srirama, 'On the Advent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa', *Vedānta Kesari*, LII, No. 2, 1965, pp. 123-26.

a certainly pre-Buddhist Upanishad.<sup>1</sup> This Upanishad does not pretend to give a biography of Kṛṣṇa; its reference to him is incidental. It mentions him as Devakīputra and pupil of Ghora Āṅgīrasa from whom he learnt how to be free from desires.<sup>2</sup> Ghora Āṅgīrasa also appears in the *Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇa* (XXX. 6) as a priest of the sun. Max Müller, Macdonell and Keith, S.K. De, A.D. Pusalker and S. Jaiswal either deny or doubt the identity of Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra of the Epic and the Purāṇas with Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra of the Upanishad.<sup>3</sup> Barth, Raychaudhuri and many others however accept the identity of the two.<sup>4</sup> Keith and others point out that in the epic-Paurāṇika tradition Sāṇḍipani and Garga appear as the preceptors of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa instead of Ghora of the Āṅgīrasa family. But the pupillage of Kṛṣṇa to a sage of the Āṅgīrasa family is referred to in the first century A.D. by Aśva-ghosa in his *Saudarananda* (I.23) who states that taking after their preceptor's gotra Vasubhadra, evidently Vāsudeva, became a Gautama. According to Monier-Williams, Gotama is the name of a ṛshi belonging to the family of Āṅgīrasa.<sup>5</sup> Keith remarks that the similarity between the names of the two Kṛṣṇas may be a mere accident as in the case of the Patañjalis of the *Mahābhāṣya* and of the *Yogasūtra*. But in the case of the two Kṛṣṇas the similarity extends farther than mere similarity of names. The

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Goyal, *RHAI*, I, pp. 41-52; Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 226; Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p. 385; Mitra, R.L., Intro. to the *Chh., Upa.*, p. 23 f.; *EHVS*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>According to B.B. Majumdar (*Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 2 ff.) the *Chhāndogya* does not describe Kṛṣṇa as a pupil of Ghora Āṅgīrasa; it is Śaṅkarāchārya who in his commentary on this *Upa.* makes this statement. If true, the contention of Majumdar would remove the difficulty created by the differences in the names of Kṛṣṇa's guru as given in the Paurāṇika tradition and the *Chhāndogya*. But even if the *Chhāndogya* does not mention the discipleship of Kṛṣṇa explicitly, its assumption that after hearing what Ghora had said 'Kṛṣṇa lost all thirst for knowledge' suggests that Kṛṣṇa was the disciple and Ghora the guru. Probably it was what prompted Śaṅkara to attribute teacher-taught relationship to them.

<sup>3</sup>Max Müller, *SBE*, I, 52, n. 1; Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*; De, S.K., *IHQ*, XVIII, pp. 293-301; Pusalker, A.D., *Studies in the Epics and the Purāṇas*, p. 57 f.; Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 70 f.

<sup>4</sup>Barth, *op. cit.*; Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 48 ff.; S.K. Bhattacharya, *Kṛṣṇa Cult*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 71.



epic Kṛṣṇa is the son of Devakī; the Kṛṣṇa of the Upanishad is also called the son of Devakī. The Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* is often styled as Achyuta; the same epithet figures in the Upanishad about the pupil of Ghora. The teacher of the Upanishadic Kṛṣṇa belonged to a family (Āṅgīrasa) closely associated with the Bhojas, who were also the kindred of the epic Kṛṣṇa. In the Karmāparvan Āṅgīrasī śruti is praised by Kṛṣṇa as the best of all the revealed texts.

The doctrines which Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra is said to have learnt from Ghora Āṅgīrasa reappear in the *Gītā* : (a) Ghora Āṅgīrasa deprecates *vidhiyajña* while the *Gītā* makes little of *dravyamāna yajña*. Ghora taught Kṛṣṇa that the life of man in its various states till his death may be compared to the various ceremonies observed in ritual sacrifices; the mystic meaning of sacrifice is the life of Man himself (*Purushayajñavidyā*). With this we may compare *Gītā* IX. 2 : "Arjuna! whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as gift, whatever you do by way of penance, offer it all to Me". (b) Ghora taught Kṛṣṇa that the practice of certain virtues, austerity, liberality, uprightness, harmlessness and truthfulness is as effective as the offering of the customary gifts to the priests : 'Atha yattapo dānamārjjavamahiṃsā satyavachanamitā tā asya dakṣiṇāḥ (*Chh. Upa.* III. 17.4). These virtues occur in *Gītā* XVI. 1-2 where they find a place in the list of qualities attributed to the man of Godlike character (*Dānam damaścha yajñaścha svādhyāyastapaārjjavam ahimsā satyāmakrodhaḥ*). Especially *ahimsā*, a word which does not occur again in the principal Upanishads, became a special virtue of the Vaiṣṇava sect. (c) Ghora also taught Kṛṣṇa that at the hour of death a man should think, "Thou art the Imperishable, the Never-falling, and the very Essence of life". This lesson of the importance of the last thought is taught in *Gītā* VIII. 5-6 which declares that the remembrance of Kṛṣṇa at the time of death leads one to Him. (d) The Śāntiparvan of the *Mbh.* states that the Sātvatavidhi expounded by the epic Kṛṣṇa had been declared in the days of yore by the sun himself. In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa also states that the Yoga taught by Him was originally enunciated by the sun. All these facts prove that the parallelism between the teaching of Ghora and those of the *Gītā* is not only superficial. It is true that



none of the cardinal principles of Bhāgavatism as enunciated in the *Gītā* are referred to by Ghora, but it is nobody's case that Bhāgavatism existed in a developed form in the age of the *Chhāndogya*. The evidence of the *Chhāndogya* only proves that Kṛṣṇa Devakī-putra was a historical figure who learnt many of the doctrines found in the *Gītā* (composed several centuries later) from Ghora Āṅgīrasa.

#### *Date of Kṛṣṇa of the Epic and Chhāndogya*

The human Kṛṣṇa of the *Chhāndogya*, who was a religious thinker, was thus identical with the Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* and the *Mbh.* the friend of the Pāṇḍavas. The *Chhāndogya* does not refer to the Pāṇḍavas because there is no occasion in the text to mention them. But there is no inherent improbability in the supposition that the epic Kṛṣṇa was, in his early years, taught by Ghora Āṅgīrasa. The similarities in the ideas of the *Chhāndogya* and the *Gītā* prove it. Further, the date of the two is the same. The *Chhāndogya* may easily be placed in the 9th century and the Mahābhārata was fought about the same time.<sup>1</sup> Further, the Jaina tradition makes Kṛṣṇa a contemporary of Arishṭanemi or Neminātha, the 22nd Tirthaṅkara who was the immediate predecessor of Pārśvanātha, the 23rd Tīrathaṅkara.<sup>2</sup> As Pārśvanātha flourished in the 8th century B.C. Kṛṣṇa, the contemporary of Arishṭanemi, the immediate predecessor of Pārśva, must have flourished in the ninth century B.C. The Paurāṇika genealogies of the post-Bhārata War kings also brings us to the same date, as Pargiter has shown.

#### *Evolution of the Kṛṣṇa Saga : the Super-imposition of Vedic Legends*

But the life of Kṛṣṇa, which must have been somewhat complex even in its original form, became far more complex and assumed legendary dimensions when he was deified and identified with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa and Divine Vāsudeva (*infra*). One of the results of this process was the transmutation of some Vedic legends in

<sup>1</sup>For the date of the Bhārata War vide, Goyal, 'Mahābhārata aurā Dāśarājñā ki Tithiyān,' *Purāṇkalpa*, I, iv, 1973, pp. 5-18.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, I, pp. 271-79; II, pp. 112-19; *EHVS*, p. 39.

which persons having the name Kṛṣṇa figured and their superimposition on the Kṛṣṇa saga and also the transfer of some of the elements of personality of the Vedic gods Indra and Viṣṇu to him. The Vedic and Buddhist texts now several seers bearing the name of Kṛṣṇa, who were quite distinct from Vāsudeva of the Vṛṣṇi race. Such were Kṛṣṇa the father of Viśvakāya (*RV*, I. 116.23; I.117.7), Kṛṣṇa Āṅgīrasa (*Kaush. Br.*, XXX, 9), Kṛṣṇa Hārīta (*Ait. Āraṇyaka*, III. 2-6), Kāṇha, the mighty seer mentioned in the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*.<sup>1</sup> In the *RV* Kṛṣṇa is the name of a demon who lays hidden in the river Amśumatī (Yamunā) and whom Indra slew. Here we have the nucleus of the hostility between Indra and Kṛṣṇa. On the other hand, the term Govinda is used in the *RV* as an epithet of Indra in the sense of the finder of the cows. Another epithet of Kṛṣṇa, Keśi-Nisūdana, is also applicable to Indra. Moreover Kṛṣṇa is closely associated with Arjuna, regarded as the son of Indra. In the *HV* (II.68.33) Kṛṣṇa describes himself as the younger brother of Indra. Viṣṇu is also known by the name Upendra. Thus the *HV* account of Kṛṣṇa opposing the Indra cult and instructing the gopas to abandon the old ritual and to worship the mountains and cattle, is only a record of the super imposition of the new Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult on the old Indra worship.

*Super-imposition of the Manu-Vaivasvata Legends? Identity of Heracles of Mathurā mentioned by Megasthenes with Kṛṣṇa is an a priori Assumption*

Almost all the Indian historians follow R.G. Bhandarkar in assuming that the Heracles who, according to Megasthenes was held in special honour by the people of Mathurā, may be identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. They have apparently done so without analysing the statement of Megasthenes critically. The identity of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and the Heracles of Megasthenes cannot be assumed by arguing that the nature and characteristics of the Indian and Greek gods are similar—if they are similar at all. The identification of the Indian Heracles must rest upon his own cha-

<sup>1</sup>Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I, p. 118; cf. Majumdar, B.B., *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, p. 268.

characteristics for, though he has been described in detail by Megasthenes and other Greek writers, his personality does not correspond with the personality of his Greek counterpart.<sup>1</sup> In other words for the identification of the Indian Heracles we will have to seek parallels to his characteristics in the features of Indian gods and heroes themselves. But here the difficulty is—and it has not been appreciated by any scholar so far—that the Greek writer has used only two names for the Indian gods and heroes—Dionysos whom he calls the god of the hill people and Heracles whom he describes as the god of plains or cities.<sup>2</sup> The possibility, therefore emerges that in Heracles Megasthenes has described several Indian gods and heroes.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it is possible that the personality of the Indian Heracles is a composite one.

#### *Indian Heracles in Classical Writers*

The first god, who appears to have contributed to the composite personality of the Indian Heracles, is Śiva. This strain manifests itself best when the Greek authors describe his association with the Sibae or the Sibi people. It is said that like Heracles they wore skins, carried clubs and branded on the back of their oxen the representation of a club wherein the Greeks recognised a memorial of the club of Heracles.<sup>4</sup> These features, as Cunningham<sup>5</sup> believed, tend to suggest the identity of the Indian Heracles with Śiva.

That by Heracles Kṛṣṇa may also be meant is suggested, but only slightly by an observation of Quintus Curtius (1st cent. B.C.). On the authority of the historians of Alexander he informs us that the soldiers of Porus, who regarded it a dishonour more undesirable than death to flee from the battle-field, carried the image of Heracles in front of their ranks, for they believed that it would

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Dahlquist, Allan, *Megasthenes and Indian Religion (MIR)*, Uppasala, 1962, p. 33 f.

<sup>2</sup>Majumdar, *Classical Accounts of India*, p. 273.

<sup>3</sup>He has apparently done so in the case of Dionysos. Cf. Ch. on Śaivism.

<sup>4</sup>Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>5</sup>Cunningham, A., *Coins of Ancient India*, pp. vii-viii. Śiva wears animal skin and in his Lakuliṣa incarnation at least, carries a club. On the Kushāṇa coins also he is shown as carrying a club. The tribal name Śibi also suggests this identification.



enthuse them for victory.<sup>1</sup> As Porus was himself a descendant of the Pāṇḍavas and as Kṛṣṇa is said to have taught Arjuna to fight in the Bhārata War with zeal, J.N. Banerjea is inclined to identify the Heracles described by Curtius with Kṛṣṇa.<sup>2</sup> He is most probably right.

But what about the description of Heracles in connection with Mathurā, which is regarded as the main basis for the prevalence of the worship of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa in the Mathurā region in c. 300 B.C.? Before we discuss this question let us see what Megasthenes himself has to say about it. He has been quoted extensively by Arrian who explicitly states that he took his material for this passage from Megasthenes whom he mentions three times by name.<sup>3</sup> Diodorus also uses this material but briefly, and without naming his source.<sup>4</sup> However, he adds a few minor points and helps us in understanding the intention of Arrian better. Other classical writers do not add anything new.

Shorn of the unnecessary details and miraculous elements, the following is the summary of the Heracles legend, as given with reference to Mathurā :

According to Megasthenes, as quoted by Arrain, Heracles who 'was held in special honour' by the Sourasenoi of Mathurā, came to India 'as a stranger' but according to another tradition was 'in reality a native of India'. He flourished 138 generations before Sandracottos (Chandragupta Maurya). He had a daughter named Pandaia, who was born to him late in life. He had 'incestuous intercourse with the girl in order that a race of kings sprung from their common blood might be left to rule over India'. He had 'a very numerous progeny of male children' born to him. Diodorus makes this point more explicit. He says that 'the sons having reached man's estate' Heracles 'divided all India into equal portions for his children whom he made kings in different parts of his dominions. He provided similarly for his only daughter whom he reared up and made a queen'. Arrian adds the additional information that Heracles entrusted his daughter with the sovereignty

<sup>1</sup>Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, *Purāṇic and Tāntric Religion*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-23.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 236.



of the region which was called after her name, Pandaia. 'When he was ridding land and sea of whatever evil monsters infested them, he found the sea-pearl. Appreciating its beauty as a wearing ornament, Heracles, it is said, caused it to be brought from all the seas into India, that he might adorn with it the person of his daughter'.

### *Vaivasvata Manu in the Vedic and Paurāṇika Literature*

The legend of the Indian Heracles as detailed above at once reminds one of Manu, the ancestor of all the Vedic Kshatriya dynasties. This Heracles has nothing in common with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, and for that matter with Śiva or Indra. The notion popular with a section of scholars that Megasthenes has described Heracles as the incarnation of Viṣṇu<sup>1</sup> is absolutely baseless. On the other hand the similarities between Manu Vaivasvata and the Indian Heracles are too numerous and significant to be ignored. In the Vedic literature, which obviously must have been one of the main sources, of knowledge for the informants of Megasthenes about contemporary Indian religions, is found the legend of Manu which evolved gradually. In the *RV* Manu appears as 'the first man', the son of Vivasvant, the first of sacrificers and establisher of sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> In the *Śatapatha* he is called the Ruler of Man while Yama, another son of Vivasvant, is described as the Ruler of the Dead.<sup>3</sup> Of his legends, the most important is that of the Deluge, described in the *Śatapatha*, of which he is warned by a fish and which he escapes with the agency of the fish. Thereafter, and from the point of view of our problem it is a very significant fact, he had incestuous relations with his daughter Iḍā and

<sup>1</sup>Lassen (quoted in *MIR*, p. 9 f.) was the first to suggest it. It won acceptance among a section of scholars. Cf. *The Cambridge History of India*, I, Cambridge, 1922, p. 167. Also see A.D. Pusalker (*Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas of India*, Bombay, 1955, p. 65), who believes that "the Greek ambassador definitely states that Kṛṣṇa was regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu".

<sup>2</sup>Keith, A.B., *The Religion, and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, I, Cambridge, Mass, 1925, p. 228 f.

<sup>3</sup>*ŚB*, XIII. 4.3.3-4.

produced the human race.<sup>1</sup> In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>2</sup> and the *Taittirīya Samhitā*<sup>3</sup> he is connected with the law of property; he divided his property among his sons and enabled one of them, Nābhānedishṭha, who was deprived of his share by his brothers, to get his patrimonial heritage.

The Paurāṇika legends regarding Manu Vaivasvata are apparently the amplified versions of the Vedic legends. It is true that in their present form the Purāṇas were edited in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods but, as shown by A.S. Altekar and many others,<sup>4</sup> in their original form these works existed in the later Vedic and post-Vedic periods also. Hence it may reasonably be surmised that in some form or other the Manu legend of the Purāṇas was known to the Indians of the age of Megasthenes. Now, what do the Puraṇas tell us about Manu? Firstly, he is described as the son of Vivasvant and the first post-Diluvian ruler of India though the story of the Deluge is found in a greatly amplified form and the fish of the *Satapatha* has become the fish incarnation of Viṣṇu. Secondly, all the Vedic Kshatriya dynasties are said to have sprung from him. He is described as the father of nine valiant sons, Nabhānedishṭha of the Brāhmaṇas being one of them. Thirdly, apart from these nine sons he is described as the father of a tenth son also who had a dual personality—as male Iḷa and female Iḷā. It appears that the moral outlook of the post-Vedic Indians compelled them to give this twist to the Vedic legend of Manu's incestuous relations with Iḷā. However, it is significant that Iḷā or Iḷā continues in the Purāṇas to be the

<sup>1</sup>ŚB, I, 8.1.1-10. "She came to Manu. 9. Manu said to her, 'Who art thou?' 'The daughter', she replied.....10. With her he lived worshipping and toiling in arduous religious rites, desirous of offspring. With her he begot this offspring which is this offspring of Manu" (*Original Sanskrit Texts*, I, reprinted, Delhi, 1972, p. 184).

<sup>2</sup>*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, V. 14 (OST, I, p. 191 f.).

<sup>3</sup>*Taittirīya Samhitā*, III.1.9.4 (*Manuḥ putrebhyo dāyaṁ vyabhajat*; OST, I, p. 193).

<sup>4</sup>Altekar, A.S., Presidential Address (Ancient India Section), Indian History Congress, 1939; A.D. Pusalker in *The Vedic Age*, Bombay, 1965, p. 271 f.

<sup>5</sup>For a collated account of Manu Vaivasvata vide Pargiter, F.E., *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, reprinted, Delhi, 1962, p. 84 f. and pp. 253-55; Pusalker A.D., *The Vedic Age*, p. 176 f.; Siddhesvara Sastri, Chitrava, *Bhārata-varshīya Prāchīna Charitra Kośa*, pp. 611-13.

eldest child of Manu. Fourthly, the Paurāṇika Manu, like his Vedic counterpart, divided his whole realm amongst his sons including Ilā/Iḷā. The association of Manu, if not of Iḷā, with the South (where the Pāṇḍya kingdom of Megasthenes was situated) is mentioned in the *Bhāgavata P.* where, in the Deluge legend, he is described as the Lord of the Draviḍa Country (Draviḍeśvaraḥ).<sup>1</sup> And lastly, and it is also a very significant point, Manu is supposed to have flourished 135 generations before Chandragupta Maurya, for according to the genealogical tables of the Paurāṇika dynasties prepared by Pargiter,<sup>2</sup> from Manu to the fall of the Nanda dynasty 135 generations of kings had ruled over the various parts of the country (95 generations of the pre-Bhārata War period + 5 generations from Yudhisṭhira to Adhisīmākṛṣṇa + 26 generations between Adhisīmākṛṣṇa and Mahāpadma Nanda + 9 kings of the Nanda dynasty); Chandragupta Maurya himself belonged to the 136th generation.

*Indian Heracles of Mathurā Appropriated the Legends of Manu Vaivasvata*

Thus we find that almost all the main points about Heracles (as described in connection with Mathurā) and Manu Vaivasvata are similar. Both of them flourished at about the same time (roughly more than 135 generations earlier than Chandragupta Maurya). Manu Vaivasvata, like Heracles, had many sons and divided his kingdom among them. Like Heracles also, he is said to have had incestuous relations with his daughter whom he gave a part of his dominion. From Megasthenes it appears that in his days it was also believed that Heracles had been the ruler of a southern country which came to be known as Pāṇḍya after the name of his daughter Pandaia who was made its queen by Heracles. The memory of the association of Manu Vaivasvata with this region is preserved in the *Bhāgavata P.* wherein he has been described as the Lord of the Draviḍa country. It appears that by the time Magasthenes visited India some legends about the Pāṇḍya country had got currency. In this connection it is worth noting that Megasthenes himself heard of the famous pearls of this country—of course in

<sup>1</sup>*Bhāgavata P.*, VII. 24.13.

<sup>2</sup>Pargiter, F.E., *op. cit.*, pp. 144-48 and pp. 179-83.



the form of a legend — which were in the later ages so graphically described by Khāravēla,<sup>1</sup> Kālidāsa,<sup>2</sup> Macro Polo,<sup>3</sup> etc. It is also interesting that the Pāṇḍyas had their capital at Mathurā (Madurai) and it existed at least as early as the date of the *Ghaṭa Jātaka*, for its author refers to the Mathurā of northern India as Upper Mathurā<sup>4</sup> which by implication suggests the existence of Southern Mathurā. Further, the name Pāṇḍya is derived by Kātyāyana in a Vārttika<sup>5</sup> from Pāṇḍu who was himself an Aila, that is a descendent of Ilā. These facts indicate the process by which the legend of Pandaia might have evolved.

Here a few objections against the proposed identification of the main features of Heracles with Vaivasvata Manu may be anticipated and answered. Firstly, it may be pointed out that nowhere in Indian literature the worship of Manu as a god occurs; he is described only as a human ancestor. That is so. But we submit that Megasthenes has also mentioned Heracles only as a human ancestor; while describing him in association with Mathurā, he nowhere refers to his 'worship as a god'. All he says is that Heracles was 'held in special honour' by the Sourasenoī. Secondly, objection may be raised that the name of the town Kleisobora, which may be the Greek form of the name Kṛshṇapura,<sup>6</sup> suggests that in the age of Megasthenes Kṛshṇa was already popular in the Mathurā region. But it is not our contention that Kṛshṇa worship was not known in Mathurā in the fourth century B.C. in this area. What we are suggesting is that Heracles of Mathurā, who was 'held in special honour' by the Sourasenoī, had appropriated the legends of Manu Vaivasvata. Logically these two are quite different propositions. Here it may also be pointed out that Diodorus describes Heracles as the founder of a number of cities, the most renowned and the greatest of which was Palibothra (Pāṭaliputra). It was 'fortified with trenches of notable dimension which were filled with water introduced from the river'. He also

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Khāravēla's Hathigumpha inscription (*Paṁḍarājā...mutā-mani ratanāni āharāpayati*), Goyal, *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Samgraha*, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup>*Raghuvamśa*, VI, 50.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Lal, K.S., *History of the Khaljis*, Allahabad, 1950, p. 186 f.

<sup>4</sup>Cowell's trans., IV, p. 55 f.; cf.; Sircar, *Religious Life in Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>On Pāṇini, IV. I. 168.

<sup>6</sup>Some doubt this identification (cf. *MIR*, pp. 131-33).



built a costly palace there.<sup>1</sup> But apparently this legend has nothing to do with either Manu or Kṛṣṇa. It appears that the foundation of Pāṭaliputra, which came into existence as late as fifth century B.C., was wrongly attributed to Heracles either by Megasthenes himself or by his informants. To Manu, the first king of the country, such an achievement was easily attributable.

*Super-imposition of Legends which Grew out of the Victory of Bhāgavatism over Other Cults*

Many episodes of the Kṛṣṇa saga represent mythical accounts of the subjugation of some of the lower cults by Bhāgavatism when it was gradually accepted as authoritative by the orthodox people. Vegetation worship, beast worship, serpent worship, the dark and fearful cults of ghost-and-demon worship, all bowed to the new god and contributed some legends to his evolving personality. The dragging of the mortar by child Kṛṣṇa, which uprooted the two arjuna trees, obviously refers to the supplanting of some local tree-worship by the Vāsudeva cult. The *HV* expressly states that these trees were being worshipped as gods for granting objects of desire. The quarrel of Kṛṣṇa, with his maternal uncle Kāṁsa may have a historical foundation, for it is mentioned in the *Ghaṭa Jātaka*, and the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali; but in the age of Patañjali both Kāṁsa and Kṛṣṇa were regarded as deities also. According to a *Mahābhāshya* passage in dramatic performances the grāthikas divided themselves into two groups : those representing the followers of Kāṁsa had their faces blackened and those of Kṛṣṇa had their faces painted red.<sup>2</sup> The account of the killing of Pūtanā by Kṛṣṇa, of Bāṇa's war with Kṛṣṇa and of Kārttikeya with Pradyumna are other such instances. Pūtanā appears to have been a mother-goddess of dreadful nature who afflicted children. She appears among the attendant mothers of Skanda in the Śalya-parvan of the *Mbh.* and is identified with Āryā in the Āryastava of the *HV*. Her worship clashed with that of Kṛṣṇa, in which the latter emerged victorious.

At one time Arjuna was also deified and worshipped. The *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini refers to the worship of Arjuna alongwith

<sup>1</sup>Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>*EHVS*, p. 29.

that of Vāsudeva (*Vāsudev-Ārjunābhyām vuñ*). Kātyāyana lays down that in a *dvadva* compound of two words the one denoting a more honoured entity will precede the other denoting the less honoured.<sup>1</sup> The *Mbh.* preserves the tradition about the worshippers of Arjuna and states that Vāsudeva and Arjuna were really the ancient gods known by the names of Nārāyaṇa and Nara (V.49.19). However, the origin of Arjuna worship is shrouded in mystery. The *RV* (VI.9.1) refers to the 'dark' (*kṛshṇa*) day and 'the bright or white' (*arjuna*) day, but this apparently has no connection with the epic Kṛshṇa and Arjuna.<sup>2</sup> In a *Jātaka* Arjuna is mentioned as the eldest of the five sons of Pāṇḍu. The *Mbh.* mentions Arjuna as the son of Indra while the *Śatapatha* informs that Arjuna is a secret (*guhya*) name of Indra. Later, the Arjuna worshippers were obviously merged among the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa.

The Purāṇas refer to the shifting of Kṛshṇa and his cowherds from Gokula to the forests of Vṛndā; and some later Purāṇas relate the seduction of Tulasī-Vṛndā, wife of the demon Jalandhara (or of nāga Śaṅkhachūḍa in some accounts) by Viṣṇu. She is also an example of the worship of the mother-goddess of a grove coming to term with Bhāgavatism.

The story of a false Vāsudeva, Paunḍraka Vāsudeva, mentioned in several Purāṇas and the *Mbh.*, may be explained only by the supposition that he was a rival of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa and claimed to be the embodiment of Divine Vāsudeva. It shows that Kṛshṇa's divinity was not easily accepted; his worshippers had to make strenuous efforts to establish it. In the Sabhāparvan of the *Mbh.* Śiśupāla makes fun of Kṛshṇa and of his 'so-called' valorous deeds.

### *Kṛshṇa as Gopāla*

The idea of the Gopāla (pastoral) Kṛshṇa and some of the Pāurāṇika stories about his childhood were evidently borrowed from the Viṣṇu legends of the Vedic literature. Thus he is Gopa (Viṣṇu is so called in *RV*, I.22.28) and Śipivishṭa (Viṣṇu in *RV*

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Supra*, p. 96 and n. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Gonda, *AEV*, p. 159.

VII. 99.5-6) and Govinda and Damodara (Vishṇu in the *Baudhāyana DS*, II.5.24). However despite the fact that the idea of a pastoral Kṛṣṇa was borrowed from the Vedas, its development was largely the result of his identification and amalgamation with the worship of some youthful god of the Ābhīra tribe. As noted above, in the *Vishṇu P.* Kṛṣṇa tells his tribesmen that as they possess neither fields nor houses and wander about with their wagons and cattle, they should worship cows and mountains, not Indra. R.G. Bhandarkar suggests that the foster parents of Kṛṣṇa belonged to the foreign nomadic Ābhīra tribe which came to India in the early centuries of the Christian era, and brought with it the Christian legends of a pastoral god whose identification with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa led to the engrafting of Christian myths on the latter. The theory of the Christian origin of these stories has been rightly questioned (*infra*), but the connection of the Ābhīras with the worship of Kṛṣṇa as a youthful boy-god of herdsmen seems to be indisputable. In the *Padma P.* Vishṇu is made to say that he would be born amongst the Ābhīras in his eighth incarnation. The *HV* and the *Bālacharita* of Bhāsa inform that Kṛṣṇa was brought up in a *ghosha*, and in the *Amarakośa*, Ābhīrapalli is a synonym for *ghosha*. The work further enumerates Ābhīra as a synonym for *gopa*. Whether or not the Ābhīras were a foreign tribe as, following R.G. Bhandarkar, some scholars including D.R. Bhandarkar, D.C. Sircar etc. believe, is a controversial question. Mirashi and others think that the Ābhīras were an aboriginal people living in the Punjab before the Aryans came in India. According to J.N. Banerjea however a Deoghar relief which depicts Nanda and Yaśodā, the foster-parents of Kṛṣṇa, are shown wearing characteristically foreign garments.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>B.B. Majumdar (*op. cit.*, p. 269 ff.) points out that the Ābhīras existed in India in the second century B.C. because Patañjali refers to them. Further, the gopas are described as Vaiśyas and comely in appearance while the Ābhīras were *ugradarśana*. The Ābhīras are also not known to have settled in the Mathurā region in that period. Kosambi describes Kṛṣṇa as a dark hero of the non-Aryan Yādava tribe (*JBBRAS*, NS, XXVII, p. 43). But the Yādavas are described as an Aryan race, the descendants of Yadu. On the basis of the epithet *Keśī* Buddha Prakash ('Kṛṣṇa, an Anthropological Study', *P.K. Gode Commemoration Volume*, II, pp. 36-57) believes that Kṛṣṇa represented Caspian ethnic group. But Kṛṣṇa was a *Keśinisūdana*, and not *Keśī*.



*Kṛṣṇa as Gopīvallabha*

The identification of Kṛṣṇa with the Ābhīra divinity appears to have been largely responsible for the introduction of such erotic elements in the Kṛṣṇa saga as his amorous dalliances with the gopīs. But the story of his relations with the gopīs is found only in the *HV* and the *Purāṇas*, and is not met with in the *Jātakas* or in any other early text. Its mention in the *Mbh.* is a matter of dispute.<sup>1</sup> The *HV* and the *Vishṇu P.* narrate Kṛṣṇa's sports with gopīs who are described as *ratipriyā* (fond of pleasures). The *Bhāgavata P.* further elaborates these stories. According to the *Vishṇu P.* Kṛṣṇa enacted the *rāsa* in the company of the cowherd-maidens, and the *HV* and the *Bālacharita* of Bhāsa refer to the performance of *hallīsā* or *hallisaka* dance by Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs.<sup>2</sup> The *Gāthāsaptasati* of Hāla contains several gāthās referring to the stories of Kṛṣṇa and gopīs but their date is uncertain. Some Tamil poems of the Saṅgam Age also refer to a pastoral god and his amusements in the cow-settlements. These poems probably formed a genuine part of the earliest Tamil literature, which was composed between 100-300 A.D. The *Śilappadikāram* also mentions that Mayavan (Kṛṣṇa) and his wife Nappināi were worshipped by the cowherds and the milk-maids. Evidently the legends of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa were popular among the people of South India also.

*Teachings of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa : Gītā as the Primary Work of Bhāgavatism*

The two earliest sources for Bhāgavata dharma, which at some stage of its evolution was identified with the Pāñcharātra and came to be known also as Sātvata, Ekāntika or Nārāyaṇīya

<sup>1</sup>Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 467. According to J.N. Banerjea and many others the verses referring to Kṛṣṇa's life at Vṛndāvana uttered by Śiṣupāla are all interpolations. But these verses are found in all the MSS of the *Mbh.* and are accepted as genuine in the critical ed. (Majumdar, B.B. *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 235). There are other indications also that some of the authors of the Epic knew Kṛṣṇa's associations with gopālas. When Subhadrā was first sent to her mother-in-law's house, she was dressed as a gopālikā that is gopī (*ibid.*, p. 237). Draupadī also invoked Kṛṣṇa as Gopījana vallabha.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Rāsaliḷā kā Aitihāsika Vikāsa' *Parishad Patrikā*, July 1965, pp. 60-67.



dharma are the *Gītā* and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* (Śāntiparvan, 333-51). Of these two, the *Gītā* is obviously older (*supra*, p. 100) because (a) the doctrine of the four Vyūhas mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya is unknown to the *Gītā*; (b) the Nārāyaṇīya knows the *Gītā* "taught by the Lord himself (*Bhagavatā svayam*) when Arjuna became despondent in face of the drawn out armies of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas"<sup>1</sup> and (c) there is far greater emphasis on bhakti in the *Gītā* than in the Nārāyaṇīya which may be regarded as a proof of the comparative greater antiquity of the former.

As a whole the *Gītā* is far less sectarian in nature than the Nārāyaṇīya. This fact, coupled with the universality and syncretic nature of its doctrines and absence of any specific reference to the Bhāgavata or Sātvata dharma in the *Gītā* itself, has led many a scholars to deny its importance as a text of Bhāgavatism. But the *Gītā* IV.1-2 mentions exactly the same tradition as does the Nārāyaṇīya (*Mbh.* XII.348.51-52) about the origin of its teachings viz. that this immortal yoga was taught by the Lord to Vivasvān (Sun god) who conveyed it to Manu and who in turn imparted it to Ikṣhvāku—proving thereby that if the latter is a Bhāgavata text, which it certainly is, the former also expounds the same religion.<sup>2</sup> The same is further confirmed when Vaiśampāyana, while speaking of the origin of the Bhāgavata dharma directly from Nārāyaṇa, tells Janamejaya : "It is this religion. O king, that has already been taught to you in the *Harigītā* (evidently another name of the Bhagavadgītā)"<sup>3</sup> The very name Bhagavadgītā may also be taken as the proof of the supposition that it embodies the doctrine of the Bhāgavata or Nārāyaṇīya dharma. Further, all the five aspects of the Lord mentioned in the Pāñcharātra texts excepts one—the Vyūha—are touched in the *Gītā*, some in greater and the others in lesser detail. These four aspects are *para*, *vibhava*, *antaryāmin* and *archā*. The *para* or the highest aspect of the Lord is explained on many occasions and in various ways. He is the same as the Upanishadic Brahman, Ātman and Paramātman; He is also the

<sup>1</sup>*Mbh.*, XII. 348.8.

<sup>2</sup>Tilak, B.G., *Gītā Rahasya*, pp. 669-70.

<sup>3</sup>*Mbh.*, XII. 346.11.

Purusha, nay the Purushottama.<sup>1</sup> The *vibhava* or *avatāra* aspect is described in the fourth chapter where it is enunciated that when-so-ever dharma declines and adharma rises. He creates Himself for saving the virtuous and for destroying the wrong-doers. It happens age after age (IV 5-8; vide *supra*, Ch. 3). The *antaryāmin* (inner controller) aspect of the Lord is best expressed in the last Chapter of the *Gītā* where it is averred that "the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings (*hrdeṣe tiṣṭhati*), and by His elusive power spins them round (as if) set on machines" (XVIII. 61). As regards the last or *archā* aspect, we may find it implicit in IX.26: "If any earnest soul makes offering to Me, with devotion, of leaf or flower or fruit or water that offering of devotion I enjoy." This mode of worship (*pūjā*) of (the image) of the Lord is in clear contrast to the offering of oblation to the Vedic gods through the medium of sacrificial fire.

The true nature of the teaching of the *Gītā* may be understood only if we appreciate its tenets of bhakti (devotion) (cf. *supra* p. 100ff.) and nishkāma karman (desireless action).<sup>2</sup> A stress on theism and divine grace is also found in the *Śvetāśvatara* which is certainly older than the *Gītā*, but besides being Śaivite in character, the *Śvetāśvatara* neglects the tenet of nishkāma karman. The *Gītā* begins with a reference to Kurukshetra as Dharmakshetra implying thereby that in order to defend dharma even wars may justifiably be waged. While exhorting Arjuna to fight, Kṛṣṇa repeatedly calls it a dharmayuddha. The Bhāgavata dharma of the *Gītā* was thus activist. The Nārāyaṇīya also declares: Activitism is the characteristic of the Nārāyaṇīya dharma (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇaśchaiva dharmo Nārāyaṇātmakaḥ*).<sup>3</sup> In the *Gītā* activism is interpreted as discharge of duties with utter disregard to consequence and with complete surrender of the fruits of action to God. Arjuna must not care for the apparent consequences of the war. He should do his duty dispassionately without the least desire for the fruits of his

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Bhattacharya, H., 'Critical Observations on the Concept of God in the Bhagavadgītā', *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, Vrindavana, X, 1965, p. 40 ff. Maheshwari, H., 'Spiritual Values in the Gītā', *ibid.*, p. 11-17 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Dandekar, R.N., 'Hinduism and Bhagavadgītā', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, XII, No. 3, 1963, pp. 232-37.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 491, n. 1.

actions, 'for it is only in (rightful) actions that he has the claim, but he has never any such (right) to their fruits (*karmanyevādhi-kāraṣṭe mā phaleṣhu kadāchana*).'<sup>1</sup> Thus the teaching of desireless action is given a pronounced theistic tinge. In other words the Bhāgavata religion, specially of the *Gītā*, embodied a philosophy of action based on devotion (cf. *supra*, p. 101).

Kṛṣṇa not only expatiate on the nature of the true knowledge (*jñāna*) but also explains the true character of Yoga which is higher perspective of action and comes through detachment (*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*).<sup>1</sup> A Yogin curbs his passions and maintains calmness both in joys and sorrows. He is a *sthitaprajña* who is unmoved by honour and dishonour. He attains the highest stage of Brahman (*Brāhmisthiti*) where he is never bewildered and from which he never falls down.<sup>2</sup>

In the Chapter entitled Karmasannyāsayoga, and elsewhere, many scholars find Lord's unequivocal support for the doctrine of the unity of *jñāna* and *karman* (*jñānakarmasamuchchayavāda*), though a few others including Śaṅkarāchārya do not agree with this view. But that the Lord lays great stress on the attainment of true knowledge also, is fully proved when he describes four categories of virtuous people who resort to him. They are: (1) *ārta*—those who come to him in distress; (2) *jijñāsu*—those who approach him in a spirit of enquiry; (3) *arthārthī*—those who seek emoluments (*artha*); and lastly (4) *jñānī*—those who are (really) wise. Of these the last, the possessors of true knowledge, who are ever united to Him and who have one-souled devotion to him, are said to be the best.<sup>3</sup> Thus the *Gītā* does not seek to combine *karman* and *jñāna* in the manner in which the advocates of *jñāna-karmasamuchchayavāda* sought. For the *Gītā* *karman* and *jñāna* are not external to each other; their unity may be seen in God

<sup>1</sup>Joshi, K.S., 'On the Meaning of Yoga', *Philosophy : East and West*, XV, No. 1, 1965, pp. 53-64.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Sinha, J.N., 'Bhāgavata Religion : the Cult of Bhakti', *CHI*, IV, pp. 146-159.

<sup>3</sup>Parthasarathy, K.E., 'The Jñānī in the *Bhagavadgītā*', *The Aryan Path*, XXXIV, No. 11, 1963, pp. 493-6; Pandeya, Ramaji, 'Gītā men Sannyāsa aura Tyāga', *Prajñā*, IX, No. 1, 1963, p. 276 ff.



and in his Incarnation.<sup>1</sup>

The philosophy of desireless action as advocated in the *Gītā* is generally supported by the other portions of the *Mbh.* and also by the *Smṛtis* and the *Purāṇas*. The Epic and *Purāṇas* are full of legends which seek to establish the doctrine of the desireless action. For example, the *Vishṇu P.* II. 3.25 adopts this philosophy. The *Agni P.* in Chapter 381 gives a summary of the *Gītā* in 58 verses while the *Garuḍa P.* summarizes it in 28 verses (I. 210-38).

#### *The Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Mbh.*

The story of the Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Śāntiparvan of the *Mbh.* (cf. *supra*, pp. 99-100) begins with Nārada going to Badarikāśrama to see Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the two of the four forms—Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa and Hari—of Nārāyaṇa, the Eternal Lord. There he was surprised to find them both engaged in some religious rite. On being asked by him they told him that they worshipped the Original Substance. From there Nārada went to Śvetadvīpa, the White Island, situated beyond Meru. Its inhabitants were organless, did not eat food and worshipped the Great Being with single-minded devotion. There the Great Being Vāsudeva manifested Himself in Viśvarūpa (cf. *Gītā's* Virāṭarūpa) to him and told him that only those who are exclusively devoted to Him (Ekāntins) can get His vision. In this connection the story of king Vasu Uparichara is related who worshipped God according to the Sātvatavidhi. He performed a horse-sacrifice in which no animal was killed. In it the Lord revealed Himself only to Vasu Uparichara, and nobody else. Thereupon Vasu's priest Bṛhaspati got angry but he was told by Ekata, Dvita and Trita, the sons of Prajāpati, that the Great God does not reveal Himself to those who are not favoured by His grace. They relate how even they could not have a vision of Him despite their austerities

<sup>1</sup>Pande, *Spiritual Vision*, p. 172. For Śaṅkara while karman is a duty for the non-liberated, it does not contribute to jñāna or moksha directly and is impossible after knowledge. For Tilak the third Chapter of the *Gītā* positively establishes that action ought to continue even by the wise for the sake of society (*Jñānottara karman*). According to Aurobindo the *Gītā* begins with nishkāma karman and goes beyond it into devotional self-surrender (*ibid.*, p. 173). Cf. Nambudripad, P.M. Bhaskaran, 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His Teachings', *Vedānta Kesari*, LI, 1964, pp. 306-8.



for thousands of years. In another incident Vasu Uparichara is said to have sided in a controversy with gods (who held that in a sacrifice at least one goat must be killed) against the ṛṣhis who believed that no animal should at all be sacrificed; only vegetables and grain should be offered in accordance with the teachings of the Āraṇyakas. Vasu's favouritism to gods led him to lying in a hole in earth for a long time. However by virtue of his exclusive devotion to Nārāyaṇa he was saved and Garuḍa of Nārāyaṇa took him to Brahmaloḥa.

In the end, in the account of the Bhāgavata dharma of the present kalpa, the tradition of Vaivasvata Manu and Ikṣhvāku is related and it is said that the great dharma is professed by the Sātvatas.

From this account it is clear that the religion of the Nārāyaṇīya and the *Gītā* are almost identical. Like the *Gītā* (XI. 54) the Nārāyaṇīya also emphasizes singleminded devotion. Like the *Gītā* (XI. 48; 53) the Nārāyaṇīya makes little of the cult of sacrifice and practice of austerities. Further, both these texts emphasize the worship of Vāsudeva. The only difference between the two is that the *Gītā* gives prominence to the ideal of desireless action also; the Nārāyaṇīya does not.

### *Bhāgavatism and Other Creeds*

The theory that the Ājīvikas were a subdivision of the Bhāgavatas was propounded by Kern and accepted by Bühler.<sup>1</sup> The following arguments were advanced by them in its support : (a) The name of the first teacher of the Ājīvikas, Nanda Vachchha, means "the child of Nanda", that is Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. (b) Commenting on a passage of the *Brhājāta* of Varāhamihira, which mentions the Ājīvikas together with the Vṛddhaśrāvakas, Nirgranthas, etc., Utpala says "the use of Ājīvikas refers to those who have taken refuge with Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyaṇāśrita)". But as pointed out by D. R. Bhandarkar<sup>2</sup> Utpala does not say that the word Ājīvika means Nārāyaṇāśrita. He merely explains that in the text on which he is commenting the word Ājīvikas is used as an *upalakṣaṇā* (a mark indicative of something that the word itself

<sup>1</sup>Bühler, *JRAS*, 1911, p. 960.

<sup>2</sup>*JA*, 1912, p. 286.

does not actually express)<sup>1</sup>. The argument that Nanda Vachchha means Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva needs no comment.

The Jainas represent Vāsudeva as a near relation of their Arhat Arishṭanemi and include Vāsudeva and Baladeva among the sixty-three Śalakāpurushas, that is great personages who, according to Jainism, have influenced the course of human history. They comprise the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, twelve Chakravartins, nine Vāsudevas, nine Baladevas, and nine Prativāsudevas.<sup>2</sup> As Keith remarks Jainism is deeply permeated with Hindu influences, and especially with influences of Kṛṣṇa worship.<sup>3</sup> Its importance is seen in the fact that the legend of Mahāvīra's birth is almost entirely based on that of Kṛṣṇa's birth.<sup>4</sup> According to Macnicol<sup>5</sup> Jainism might have derived from Bhāgavatism its democratic character and universalism while according to Raychaudhuri the doctrine of ahimsā foreshadowed in the *Chhândogya* was taken up by the Jainas.<sup>6</sup> The Jaina Tīrthaṅkara Ṛṣhabha was regarded as an avatāra of Viṣṇu by some Bhāgavatas.<sup>7</sup>

The doctrine of ahimsā was afterwards taken up by the Buddhists as well. According to Senart, Poussin and Raychaudhuri there can be no doubt of the immense influence which Bhāgavatism exercised upon Buddhism.<sup>8</sup> The story of Vāsudeva forms the subject of the *Ghaṭa Jātaka*. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and the *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda* contain a number of passages which remind one of the *Gītā*. In *Saddharma* XV, 7-9 the Buddha says: "Repeatedly am I born in the world of the living...I see how the creatures are afflicted.....I will reveal to them the true law". As pointed out by Raychaudhuri this is obviously an echo of the avatāravāda of the *Gītā* (IV. 7-8). A comparison of the styles of *Buddhacharita* of Aśvaghoṣa and of the *Gītā* also leaves no room for doubt that the *Gītā* influenced the former.<sup>9</sup> The adoration of Buddha's foot-

<sup>1</sup>Raychaudhuri, H.C., *EHVS*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*JRAS*, 1915, p. 842 f.

<sup>4</sup>Apte, V.M., in *AIU*, p. 450.

<sup>5</sup>*Indian Theism*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup>*EHVS*, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup>*AIU*, p. 450.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *EHVS*, p. 75 f.; Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 65; Jayaswal, *IA*, 1918, p. 84.

prints was also probably borrowed from the conception of Viṣṇupadas.

### *Is Bhāgavatism a Plagiarism of Christianity ?*

As Bhāgavatism betrays several common features with Christianity—such as belief in the grace of god, efficacy of faith and devotion, value attributed to prayer, doctrine of incarnation etc.—early Western scholars, with their conviction in the theory of the White Man's Burden, found it difficult to resist the temptation of assuming that Kṛṣṇa worship was nothing but a plagiarism of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Some of them, such as Pavie,<sup>2</sup> even thought it humiliating for Christianity to be compared with the Kṛṣṇa cult, while others like H.H. Wilson pleaded for the study of Vaiṣṇavism and other Hindu religions if only to prove their falsity and persuade the Hindu intelligentsia to adopt the Christian faith.<sup>3</sup> The theory that Kṛṣṇa worship originated as a distorted form of Christianity and that the name of Kṛṣṇa itself is only 'a corruption of the name of the Saviour' was first advanced by P. Georgi as early as 1762.<sup>4</sup> It found a number of adherents among Western scholars, though many of them conceded that Kṛṣṇa was an ancient god of India whose worship was radically transformed under the impact of Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Alberecht Weber, who wrote his famous essay on 'An Investigation into the Origin of the Festival of Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī', in 1874,<sup>6</sup> that is more than a century after Georgi, gave a new impetus to this theory. In this and many other articles he argued that the transformation of the personality of Kṛṣṇa from the 'eager scholar' of the *Chhāndogya Upa.* and the brave hero of the early portions of the *Mbh.* into a deity can be explained only on the supposition of an external influence which

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Studies in Early Kṛṣṇa Worship' in *Bias in Indian Historiography*, ed. by Devahuti, New Delhi, pp. 120-38.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Allan Dahlquist in his *Megasthenes and Indian Religion*, (MIR), Uppsala, 1962, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Wilson, H.H., *Essays and Lectures Chiefly on the Religion of the Hindus*, II, collected and edited by Reinhold Rost, London, 1862, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Georgi, P., *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, Rome, 1762, pp. 253-65, quoted in MIR, p. 11f.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. the views of Sir William Jones, Polier, Kleukar, S. Bartolomaeo, etc. discussed in MIR, p. 12 and by H.C. Raychaudhuri in *EHVS*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup>Weber, A., *IA*, III, 1874, pp. 21-25, 47-52.



in the circumstances could be no other than Christianity. He also stated his conviction that the theory of avatāra originated as an imitation of the Christian doctrine of incarnation.<sup>1</sup>

Weber's thesis was supported *mutatis mutandis* by Hopkins,<sup>2</sup> Manicol,<sup>3</sup> Grierson,<sup>4</sup> Kennedy,<sup>5</sup> Lorinser<sup>6</sup> etc. and on some points by a few Indian scholars such as B.N. Seal<sup>7</sup> and R.G. Bhandarkar<sup>8</sup> also. Their arguments may be summarized thus:<sup>9</sup>

(1) The worship of Kṛṣṇa as the sole God is one of the latest phases of Indian religious systems, of which there is no trace in Varāhamihira.

(2) The worship of Kṛṣṇa as the sole God has no intelligible connection with his earlier position as an 'eager scholar' of the *Chhāndogya* and a brave hero of *Mbh.* This change can be explained only on the supposition of some external influence.

(3) The legend in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* of the Śvetadvīpa and the revelation which is made there to Nārada by Bhagavat Himself shows that the Indian tradition knew the fact of such an influence. According to Lassen (a) the name of the White Island and the colour of its inhabitants so different from that of the Indians, (b) the ascription to these people of the worship of an Unseen God while the Indians of the same period had images

<sup>1</sup>*Indische Studien*, II, pp. 169ff.

<sup>2</sup>Hopkins, E.W., *The Religions of India*, Boston, 1895. In one of his essays he pointed out many similarities between the Gospel of John and the *Gītā* which he ascribed to Christian influence.

<sup>3</sup>Manicol, *Indian Theism*, London, 1915, quoted in *EHVS*, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup>Grierson G.A., 'Bhakti-Mārga', *ERE*, II, pp. 539a-555b; *IA*, 1908, pp. 251-62, 373-86. He believes that Bhakti was more recent than Christianity.

<sup>5</sup>Kennedy, J., *JRAS*, 1907, pp. 951-91; *Ibid.*, 1908, pp. 505-21; *Modern Hinduism*, pp. 480 ff.

<sup>6</sup>von F. Lorinser, *IA*, pp. 283 ff. He suggests that the author of the *Gītā* was acquainted with and used the Gospels.

<sup>7</sup>Seal, B.N., *Comparative Studies in Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity*, pp. 30-53. Seal concurs with Weber in assuming that the Nārāyaṇīya Section of the *Mbh.* was composed under the impact of Christianity. He finds the description of the Eucharist in *Mbh.* XII. 335.11. However, he is also critical of the tendency of Western scholars to regard all other religions as rudimentary in comparison with Christianity.

<sup>8</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, reprinted in his *Collected Works*, IV, pp. 1-238, Poona, 1929.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 78.



of their deities, (c) the attribution to them of faith, the efficacy of which is not an ancient Indian tenet, and (d) the value attributed to prayer, which has lesser importance in Indian rites than in Christianity, prove that the legend commemorates the actual acquaintance of some Brāhmaṇas with Christianity. Seal observes: "This Nārāyaṇīya record.....makes an attempt in the Indian eclectic fashion to include Christ among the Avatārs or Incarnations of the Supreme Spirit Nārāyaṇa, as Buddha came to be included in a later age"<sup>1</sup>

(4) The legends of Kṛṣṇa's birth, the celebration of his birthday (*janmāṣṭamī*) and his life as a herdsman (*gopāla*) etc. can only be explained by the influence of Christian legends on Bhāgavatism. These similarities are, says Hopkins, "direct importations, not accidental coincidences".<sup>2</sup> According to R.G. Bhandarkar, about the first century of the Christian era the wandering Ābhīras, who came to India from Syria or Asia Minor, "brought with them, probably, traditions of the birth of Christ in a stable, the massacre of the innocents, etc., and the name Christ itself. The name became recognised as Kṛṣṇa."<sup>3</sup> "The Goanese and Bengalis often pronounce the name Kṛṣṇa as Kuṣṭo, or Kriṣṭo, and so the Christ of Ābhīras was recognised as the Sankrit Kṛṣṇa."<sup>4</sup> Macnicol on the other hand is inclined to believe that it were the Nestorian missions (which are believed to have entered India from the north in the year 639 A.D.) which may have brought stories of the birth of Christ which affected the story of Kṛṣṇa's birth in a cow-house among cattle and the massacre of the innocents, the story that his foster-father Nanda was travelling at that time to Mathurā to pay tax or tribute to Kāṁsa, and other details to be found in the various Purāṇas and in the *Mbh.*<sup>5</sup>

(5) Weber and his followers did not seek to present Kṛṣṇa worship as a distorted form of Christianity; in their opinion, Kṛṣṇa has only appropriated certain Christian features. But Lorinser arrived at the singular conclusion that the author of the *Gītā* knew and used the Gospels and the Christian Fathers. He

<sup>1</sup>Seal, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 430.

<sup>3</sup>IA, 1912, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>*Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc.*, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup>EHVS, p. 87 f.

also believed that the ideas of Śraddhā and Bhakti were not originally Indian, but were taken over from Christianity and that the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa is an imitation of the Christian dogma.<sup>1</sup> Keith even goes to the extent of saying: "The first great theistic movement of India is that of Rāmānuja.....But precisely at this point we are met with the fact that Christian religious influences are possible and even probable"<sup>2</sup>

The views of the supporters of the "Borrowing Theory" have been critically examined by Auguste Barth,<sup>3</sup> Telang<sup>4</sup> and H. C. Raychaudhuri.<sup>5</sup> Even R. G. Bhandarkar, who believed that the cult of the child Kṛṣṇa was at least partially influenced by Christianity, advanced cogent reasons to show that Kṛṣṇa worship as a bhakti cult originated in the pre-Christian period.<sup>6</sup> Their arguments may be summarized thus :

(1) The Besnagar and Ghosundi inscriptions conclusively prove that the divinity of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is not a post-Christian innovation, but is at least as old as the second-first century B.C.

(2) As pointed out by Telang, the transition from a human hero to a hero regarded as an incarnation of the Deity does not require some external influence to explain it. Similar apotheosis of Kapila, Pārśvanātha and the Buddha took place without any external influence.<sup>7</sup>

(3) The highly imaginative character of the description of the White Island and its inhabitants suggests that the Śvetadvīpa legend is not to be taken literally. Firstly, the Śvetadvīpa is said to lie to the north of the Kṣīrasāgara (Ocean of Milk) and to

<sup>1</sup>IA, II, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>JRAS, 1915, p. 836 f.

<sup>3</sup>Barth, Auguste, *The Religions of India*, Eng. trans. by Rev. J. Wood, London, 1881.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in EHVS, pp. 79, 81, 91, 95, 96.

<sup>5</sup>EHVS, pp. 76-97.

<sup>6</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.* Though Bhandarkar held that the concept of the child-god Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa was the direct outcome of the immigration into India of such foreign tribes as the Ābhīras with their belief in the personal god Jesus Christ, the shepherd, in the early centuries of the Christian era, yet he believed that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva was already an object of worship in the pre-Christian period (*op. cit.*, pp. 3-5, 13) and that the concept of bhakti originated from the Upanishadic concept of *Upāsana* (*ibid.*, pp. 37 ff.).

<sup>7</sup>EHVS, p. 79.

the north-west of Mount Meru, and above it by 32,000 yojanas (*Mbh.* XII. 335.8-9). As Telang points out it is obviously a legendary description, not of any actual region. Secondly, it is said that the people of the Śvetadvīpa did not have organs, ate nothing and entered the Sun—whatever that may mean. Thirdly, the doctrines which the Deity explained to Nārada there, cannot be shown to have any connection whatever with Christianity. As Hopkins remarks if the White Islanders are indeed to be regarded as foreigners worshipping a strange god, that god is strictly monotheistic and not trinitarian.<sup>1</sup> Weber lays stress on the expression 'first-born', which he thinks refers to Christ; but the epithet is quite common in the Vedic texts and does not mean more than 'primeval deity'.<sup>2</sup> As regard the worship of an Unseen God mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya, it was familiar to the Indians from the age of the *RV*. Fourthly, Lassen's view that prayer is a less important element in Indian than in Christian rites, is inaccurate. As is well-known there is "no hymn to Varuṇa and the Ādityas in which the prayer for forgiveness does not occur."

(4) As regards the possibility of the influence of the stories connected with the birth of Christ on similar legends about Kṛṣṇa, it has been pointed out that (a) the festival of Rāmanavamī presents many striking analogies to that of Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī. (b) Kennedy points out that there is no Christian representation of the suckling mother before the twelfth century while the association of Kṛṣṇa with Devakī, his mother, is as old as the *Chhāndogya Upa*. (c) Viṣṇu, the Vedic deity with whom Kṛṣṇa is identified in the pre-Christian *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, is called in the *RV* Gopā which means 'protector of cows',<sup>3</sup> or 'herdsman'.<sup>4</sup> Further, before the *Baudhāyana DS* was composed Dāmodara and Govinda had become well-known deities.<sup>5</sup> (d) As the enmity between Kāṁsa and Kṛṣṇa is referred to as a popular legend in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (second century B.C.), it is fair to conclude that the legend of the attempt of Kāṁsa to kill Kṛṣṇa in his childhood

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Macdonell and Keith, *The Vedic Index*, I, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup>Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Jayaswal, *IA*, 1918, p. 84.



must have also been known in that period. (e) The *Harivaṃśa* and the Purāṇas, in which the stories about the child Kṛṣṇa referred to by Weber, Hopkins and others occur, are really not so late works as these scholars would have us believe. (f) At Mandor in Marwar are found some sculptures depicting certain exploits of the child Kṛṣṇa<sup>1</sup> which cannot be dated later than the Christian era. (g) From the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* it seems that the Ābhīras were already settled in western India ('Abiria'), in the first century A.D. They are also mentioned by Patañjali. How then could they bring with them traditions of the birth of Christ in a stable, of the massacre of the innocents, and so on?<sup>2</sup>

(5) The suggestion of Lorinser is palpably wrong. (a) As we have already shown, the *Gītā* existed probably as early as the fifth century B.C. Therefore, there can arise no question of its author knowing the Gospels etc. (b) The resemblances between the passages of the *Gītā* and of the *New Testament* are, in many cases, purely verbal and unreal, while many such passages of the *Gītā* can be paralleled from the Upanishads which are certainly pre-Christian.<sup>3</sup> For example, when Kṛṣṇa says "of creations I am the beginning and the end.....of letters I am the Syllable A" (*Gītā* X, 20-33), the likeness to the words in *Revelation* (I.8), "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come", is no doubt remarkable, but Kṛṣṇa is only repeating what is found in the Upanishads, "Brahma is the A".<sup>4</sup> Kṛṣṇa's identification of Himself with everything in the universe is also in full agreement with such claims for Brahman in the Upanishads. The declaration of the *Gītā* IX.29, "They who devoutly worship Me are in Me, and I in them" and of John, VI.56, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him", are also undoubtedly similar but the *Gītā* is merely elaborating the Ṛgvedic passages which in part convey the same or a similar idea. Thus in *RV* II.11.12 it is said "O Indra, we sages have been in thee", and *RV* X.142.1 says, "This worshipper, O Agni, hath been in thee". (c) As regards *śraddhā*, by the time of Patañjali it had

<sup>1</sup>*EHVS*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup>Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 226.

become a more important element in Indian religious life than even *medhā* and *tapas*. The *Chhândogya Upa.* is one of the oldest Upanishads, and in it we have passages where great value is ascribed to śraddhā. (d) The ideas that bhakti connotes are found even in the Vedic age (pp. 90-6). (e) The concept of the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa is not a post-Christian innovation. It is clearly implied in the *TĀ* (X.1.6) which is certainly a pre-Christian work while the germs of the doctrine of avatāra or incarnation already appear in the Brāhmaṇa literature (Ch. 3, p. 81f.).

### *Christian Bias in Allan Dahlquist's Work*

In his book *Megasthenes and Indian Religion*, published in 1962, Allan Dahlquist has advanced the thesis that there is no reliable evidence for the existence of Kṛṣṇa bhakti in the pre-Christian period and that Megasthenes, on whom the advocates of the pre-Christian origin of Kṛṣṇa-bhakti have mainly relied, does not refer to Kṛṣṇa at all.<sup>1</sup> As is well-known Megasthenes, who came to the court of Chandragupta Maurya as the ambassador of Seleucus in c. 300 B.C., reports that Heracles was held in special honour by the Sourasenoi, an Indian tribe possessing two large cities of Methora and Kleisobora, on the river Jobares flowing through their country.<sup>2</sup> Following R.G. Bhandarkar<sup>3</sup> Indian scholars almost unanimously identify Heracles of the Sourasenoi with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, the Sourasenoi itself (evidently a derivative of the tribal name Śūrasena who lived in the Mathurā region) with the Sātvatas; the two cities with Mathurā and Kṛṣṇapura (probably modern Gokula) and the river Jobares with the Yamunā.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The thesis of Allan Dahlquist has not been refuted so far except by the present author ('Studies in Early Kṛṣṇa Worship', *Bias in Indian Historiography*, New Delhi, pp. 120-38. The work of Dahlquist was published in 1962. It is included in the bibliography of Suvira Jaiswal's *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism* (New Delhi, 1967) but is not discussed anywhere in the text. In the works of D.C. Sircar (*Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi, 1971) and J.N. Banerjea (*Religion in Art and Archaeology*, Lucknow, 1968, and *Purāṇic and Tāntric Religion*, Calcutta, 1966) and in other works published after 1962, it is not even mentioned anywhere.

<sup>2</sup>Majumdar, R.C., *Classical Accounts of India*, p. 221 f.; J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 12 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Among Indian scholars only Coomaraswamy has cast doubt on the identification of Heracles with Kṛṣṇa.

Dahlquist contests the identification of the Heracles of Megasthenes with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and suggests that in Heracles Megasthenes was describing the personality of the Vedic Indra.<sup>1</sup> We do not think that he has been able to give sufficient proof to make his suggestion a viable theory, but apparently he is sure of its correctness and is of the opinion that it places the problem of the relation between Christianity and Kṛṣṇaism on a new footing, since 'the only witness of the Kṛṣṇa cult as early as 300 before Christ is now removed'. He therefore asks: "May not Kṛṣṇa, despite everything that has been said on the subject, be a result of Christian influence" ?<sup>2</sup>

### *Criticism of Dahlquist*

Whether the identification of the Heracles of Megasthenes with Indra is correct or not (*supra*, p. 180ff.), it cannot be denied that Dahlquist has approached the problem with a bias. He seems to be bent upon either to neglect or explain away, on extremely flimsy and sometimes ridiculous grounds, the facts which prove the prevalence of Kṛṣṇa bhakti in the pre-Christian centuries. For example, while discussing the evidence of the *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini,<sup>3</sup> (5th-4th cent. B.C.) he takes shelter behind the now discredited view that the famous sūtra of Pāṇini on the worship of Vāsudeva and Arjuna refers to something entirely other than Kṛṣṇa bhakti,<sup>4</sup> and dismisses the *Mahābhāshya* references (2nd century B.C.) to the divinity of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva with the remark that "to judge from the works of such authors as Garbe and Bhandarkar, however, Patañjali's *Mahābhāshya* seems to provide no clear evidence of Kṛṣṇa's divinity".<sup>5</sup> As regards the *Gītā* and the Buddhist works *Niddesa* and the *Ghaṭa Jātaka*, he does not discuss them at all presumably because the dates of their composition are not certain. However, although undecided about their exact dates most scholars believe that these works belong to the pre-Christian period<sup>6</sup> and, therefore, point to the existence of the Kṛṣṇa cult before the advent of Christ.

<sup>1</sup>*MIR*, p. 88 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>Pāṇini, *Ashṭādhyāyī*, IV. 3.98 *Vāsudevārjunābhyam vau*.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *supra*, p. 96 and n.3.

<sup>5</sup>*MIR*, p. 166; cf. also p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>*AIU*, p. 437; *EHVS*, p. 38 ff.



Dahlquist's interpretation of the Besnagar Garuḍa pillar inscriptions of Heliodorus and Gautamīputra belonging to c. 100 B.C., which almost certainly prove the deification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and the existence of the Bhāgavata sect as pre-Christian developments, is really amusing. He suggests that Heliodorus, who came to the court of King Bhāgabhadra as the envoy of the Greek king Antialkidas of Taxila and was responsible for the erection of a Garuḍadhvaja at Vidiśā,<sup>1</sup> as well as Gautamīputra who erected another Garuḍadhvaja there during the reign of King Bhāgavata,<sup>2</sup> were both Buddhists.<sup>3</sup> The facts that the deity worshipped by Heliodorus is called Devadeva Vāsudeva (a name never appropriated by the Buddha), that the Garuḍadhvajās were erected in his honour (a patently Vaishṇava, and not Buddhist, practice), that the name Bhāgavata was used for the followers of Vāsudeva (a name never used for the Buddhists) and that a reference is made by Heliodorus to the three immortal precepts of the Bhāgavata sect—*dama*, *tyāga* and *apramāda* (which he most likely quoted from the *Gītā* itself),<sup>4</sup> have been dismissed by Dahlquist in an extremely cavalier fashion in favour of his contention that the name Gautamīputra "immediately suggests the Buddha".<sup>5</sup> As regards the Nanaghat record of the Sātavāhana queen Nāganikā (1st cent. B.C.) which begins with an adoration to the gods Dharma, Indra, Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva, the Moon and the Sun, and the four Lokapālas,<sup>6</sup> it is not mentioned by him at all though the reference to Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva in a *dvandva* compound (Saṅkarshaṇa-Vāsudeva) makes it certain that the author of this record had Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa in mind. Similarly, he does not discuss the famous Ghosundi inscription of Sarvatāta from Rajasthan (1st cent. B.C.)<sup>7</sup> which records the erection of a *pūjāśilā* and *prākāra* at the Nārāyaṇavāṭaka for Bhagavat Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva, both described as Anahita and Sarveśvara. The record conclusively proves that the worship

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*, p. 156 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Goyal, *ibid.*, p. 158; Banerjea, *Religion in Art and Archaeology*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>MIR, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. the *Gītā*, XVI, 1-2; also *Mbh.*, XII. 5.43.22; *EHVS*, p. 52 f.; J.N. Banerjea, *Religion in Art and Archaeology*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>MIR, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup>Goyal, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 173 ff.

of the Vṛshṇi heroes Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma (Saṅkarshaṇa) was already popular in the first century B.C. and had also become associated with the worship of Nārāyaṇa by then.<sup>1</sup> Allan Dahlquist has obviously overlooked all these facts.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Agrawala, V.S., 'Prāchīna Madhyamikā ki Nārāyaṇavātikā,' *Poddar Abhinandana Grantha*, p. 901-2.

## Chapter 8

# Evolution, Growth and Spread of Vaishnavism

### *Evolutionary Stages of Vaiṣṇavism*

From the discussion in the preceding Chapters it is obvious that the roots of Vaiṣṇavism may be traced to the Vedic texts themselves in the form of (a) the worship of Viṣṇu, not only as a member of the Vedic pantheon but probably as the object of special (though not exclusive) meditation in certain sections of the Vedic society; (b) the emergence of the Nārāyaṇa concept; (c) the rise of the doctrines of upāsana and devotion and (d) the rise of a solar cult taught by Ghorā Āṅgīrasa to Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra in which, instead of the Vedic sacrifices, emphasis was given on *tapas*, *dāna*, *ārjava*, *ahimsā*, *satyavachana* and the doctrine that all the acts of the life of a pious man constitute a sort of sacrifice to the deity. Apart from these (e) the germs of many Vaiṣṇava legends and of the theory of incarnation may be traced to the Vedic texts.

But as a distinct devotional sect Vaiṣṇavism did not exist in the Vedic age. *The first step* in its evolution was taken when Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva was identified with Divine Vāsudeva leading to the emergence of the Vāsudeva cult or Bhāgavatism. This process was going on even when the early portions of the *Mbh.* were composed for, as noted above, the story of the Pauṇḍraka-Vāsudeva proves that he was another claimant for being recognised as identical with the Divine Vāsudeva.

*The second step* in the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism was the identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with the Vedic Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa. But the question when this identification took place has not been answered satisfactorily as yet. The *Mbh.* contains indications that it was with great difficulty that the orthodox Brāhmaṇists recognised Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva as Nārāyaṇa Himself. In the reviling scene



of the Sabhāparvan we find reference to people like Śiśupāla who openly derided the claim of Kṛṣṇa to divine honours because he did not happen to be a Brāhmaṇa. Elsewhere in the *Mbh.* Kṛṣṇa is described as the avatāra of only a fraction of the higher god, representing only a black hair of Nārāyaṇa. Later he is said to represent the one-eighth portion of the God whose another one-eighth portion comprises the whole world. In the *Vishṇu P.* also he is an incarnate fraction of a portion of the Vedic god Vishṇu. As regards the epigraphic evidence, the name of Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu is conspicuous by its absence in the Ghosundi, Besnagar, and Nanaghat inscriptions of the first century B.C. It is Vāsudeva and Saṅkarshaṇa and not Vishṇu-Nārāyaṇa, who usually receive the homage of the devotees. Only the name Nārāyaṇavāṭaka applied to the place mentioned in the Ghosundi inscription where the *pūjā śilā* in honour of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva was placed within a *prākāra* indicates some connection between the worship of Nārāyaṇa and the cults of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva in that period.<sup>1</sup>

Some scholars have argued that the dedication of a Garuḍa-dhvaja in honour of the god Vāsudeva, recorded in the Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus<sup>2</sup> indicates his identity with Vishṇu, for Garuḍa, also known as Suparṇa, the golden-winged one, is connected with Vishṇu and other Sun gods.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of a Ṛgvedic passage, which describes the sun as a golden-winged eagle, Banerjea states that Garuḍa was originally a theriomorphic form of the Sun god. Later, with the identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Vishṇu, Garuḍa came to be associated with Vāsudeva also. On the other hand S. Jaiswal believes that garuḍas or suparṇas were a class of lesser divinities alongwith the yakshas, kinnaras, vidyādhara, nāgas, etc. and their worship, like that of the yakshas and the nāgas, was popular with the masses. In course of time however the garuḍa and the nāga came to be allied with the cults of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarshaṇa, although their independent worship also must have continued.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Bhāratiya Abhilekha Samgraha*, p. 176 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>*EHVS*, pp. 102-110.

<sup>4</sup>Jaiswal, S., *op. cit.*, p. 72 f.

However in the *Mbh.* story of the Vāṭpatraśāyin (III. 188-89) Mārkaṇḍeya explicitly tells Yudhishṭhira that Janārdana (Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa), his relative, is no other than Nārāyaṇa. The Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Śāntiparvan of the *Mbh.* also emphasises in a very clear manner the oneness of Nārāyaṇa with Vāsudeva. The identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu was certainly accomplished by the time the *Gītā* was composed because in it Arjuna at many places addresses Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu. Henceforth Bhāgavatism or the Vāsudeva cult was also known as Vaiṣṇavism. As Viṣṇu is one of the solar deities, it may be surmised (though there is no direct evidence for this) that he had, from the beginning, some connection with the religious movement associated with the name of Kṛṣṇa who was himself a disciple of Ghora Āṅgīrasa, a priest of the Sun.

In the tenth Prapāṭhaka of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* and the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upa.*, added as a supplement to the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, the mantra prescribed for Nārāyaṇa identifies the god with Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu. It reads thus: *Om Nārāyaṇāya vidmahe Vāsudevāya dhīmahi tanno Viṣṇuḥ prachodayāt* (the position of Vāsudeva in the middle of the passage is to be noted). It is therefore held that the three deities were considered identical as early as the third century B.C. when this text, according to Keith, was composed. But the dates of this Prapāṭhaka of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* and of the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upa.* are extremely uncertain. In his Introduction to the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, R. L. Mitra has opined that the tenth Prapāṭhaka cannot be placed earlier than the beginning of the Christian era and is in tune with the earliest of the Tantra works.

On the basis of a passage in which epithets Govinda and Dāmodara occur in the *tarpaṇa* (oblations of water to the manes, deities, etc.) section of the *Baudhāyana D S.*, K.P. Jayaswal has opined that the identity of child-god Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu was known as early as the fourth century B.C., the generally accepted date of the work. But Raychaudhuri does not see any reference to Kṛṣṇa in the passage. We feel that K. P. Jayaswal is correct when he asserts that this text identifies Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa with Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa, but we also think that this passage is a late interpolation.

The early Bhāgavata inscriptions reveal close relationship of this religion with the religion of Vedic sacrifices. The Nanaghat

cave inscription of queen Nāganikā begins with an invocation to the deities Dharma, Indra, Saṅkarshaṇa, Vāsudeva etc. and then goes on to record the payment of huge sacrificial fees to the priests for the performance of a number of Vedic sacrifices. The Bhāgavata king Sarvatāta mentioned in the Ghosundi record also performed an aśvamedha sacrifice. It appears that the Brāhmaṇas seized upon the Bhakti cults of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarshaṇa and infused Brāhmaṇical social ethics into them to re-establish their own authority.

### *Agencies of Syncretism Employed by Vaishṇavism*

The Pāñcharātra-Bhāgavatism proved to be a great syncretic religion. It coalesced with several popular cults to form a great federation of religions known as Vaishṇavism. The agencies employed by it to bring about this union were the following:

(1) The theory of the Pañchaviśṇivīras (*infra*) and the doctrine of Chaturvyūha (pp. 211-13) which helped Vāsudevism or Bhāgavatism to unite with itself the worship of several deities, specially Saṅkarshaṇa-Balarāma (pp. 213-16).

(2) The doctrine of incarnation (*avatāravāda*) discussed in Ch. 3, which not only effected a union of the worship of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa with Bhāgavatism (*supra*, Ch. 6) but also helped it to absorb a large number of deities, originally worshipped separately, within its fold (*infra*, p. 216ff.).

(3) The Puruṣa-Prakṛti theory, by the adoption of which the cult of Śrī-Lakṣmī was engrafted on it (pp. 223-30).

### *Concept of Pañchaviśṇivīras*

Although Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa alone is regarded as the founder of Bhāgavatism, several other members of his family share the honour of deification with him. An inscription of the first century A.D. found in a well at Mora near Mathurā<sup>1</sup> records the setting up of the statues of the five heroes of the Viśṇus *Bhagavatam Viśṇvīnām Pañchavīrāṇām*) in a stone temple (*śaila devagrhe*) built by a

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Bhāratiya Abhilekha Samgraha*, p. 204. Cf. the concept of the Five Dhyāni Buddhas who are regarded as the personifications of the five skandhas or elements.



woman named Toshā. They had a glowing and handsome appearance and were meant for worship (*ārchādeśām*). As pointed out by J. N. Benerjea these pañchavīras are enumerated in the *Vāyu P.* as Saṅkarshaṇa (son of Vasudeva by Rohiṇī), Vāsudeva (son of Vasudeva by Devakī), Pradyumna (son of Vāsudeva by Rukmiṇī), Sāmba (son of Vāsudeva by Jāmbavatī) and Aniruddha (son of Pradyumna), and are described as the five *manushya prakṛti devas* (gods originally human in nature). There seems to be no doubt that the worship of the Pañchavīras was prevalent in the Mathurā region about the beginning of the Christian era, apparently among the people of Yādava-Satvata-Vṛshṇi origin.<sup>1</sup> The *Vishṇudharmottara* contains rules for making their images.<sup>2</sup> The *Bṛhatsamhitā* also gives rules for making the images of Viṣṇu, Baladeva, Sāmba and Pradyumna, but excludes Aniruddha.<sup>3</sup> According to Banerjea all the five Vṛshṇivīras were originally worshipped independently. It is deduced by him from certain sculptured figures and fragmentary capitals figuring Garuḍa, Tāla and Makara, pointing to the existence of the dhvajās and shrines of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarshaṇa and Pradyumna.

### *The Vyūha Doctrine*

In the Vyūhavāda of the Pāñcharātra theology Para Vāsudeva is the fountain-head of the Chaturvyūha, i.e. Vāsudeva, Saṅkarshaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, each succeeding Vyūha emanating from its immediate predecessor. The word vyūha (*vi+uha*=shoving as under) denotes that peculiar process of creation which, while bringing the product into existence, leaves the source of the product unchanged.<sup>4</sup> Grierson puts the emanatory process of creation in this way: "The Bhagavat Vāsudeva in the act of creation produces from Himself, not only prakṛti, the indiscreet primeval matter of the Sāṅkhyas, but also a Vyūha or phase of conditioned spirit called Saṅkarshaṇa. From the combination of Saṅkarshaṇa and prakṛti

<sup>1</sup>Apte, *AIU*, p. 448.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>The author of the *Bṛhatsamhitā* was a Māga Brāhmaṇa. He has therefore retained Sāmba in this list because Sāmba was usually identified with the Sun god.

<sup>4</sup>Bhatt, S.R., *The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra-An Advaitic Approach*, p. 49, fn. 44.

spring *manas* corresponding to the Sāṅkhya *buddhi* or intelligence and also a secondary phase of conditioned spirit called Pradyumna. From the association of Pradyumna with *manas* spring the Sāṅkhya *Ahaṅkāra* or consciousness, also a tertiary phase of conditioned spirit known as Aniruddha. From the association of Aniruddha with *ahaṅkāra* spring the Sāṅkhya Mahābhūtas or elements with their qualities".<sup>1</sup> God in his *para* form is sometimes identified and sometimes distinguished from Vyūha Vāsudeva. When the two are distinguished the Vyūha Vāsudeva is said to have spring from the Para Vāsudeva. When Para Vāsudeva is not differentiated from Vyūha Vāsudeva, the number of Vyūhas, strictly speaking, is three only. Vāsudeva is the sole possessor of the six ideal guṇas—*jñāna*, *bala*, *vīrya*, *aiśvarya*, *śakti* and *tejas*, while each of his three emanations possess only two of the guṇas in turn.<sup>2</sup> From the primary four emanate the twelve subsidiary Vyūhas. Keśava, Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava from Vāsudeva; Govinda, Viṣṇu and Madhusūdana from Saṅkarshaṇa; Trivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara from Pradyumna and Hṛshikeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara from Aniruddha. To this totality of 16 are added eight Vidyeśvaras also evolved in an emanatory process. These are Purushottama, Janārdana, Adhokshaja, Upendra, Achyuta, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsiṃha and Hari. The Vyūhas, Sub-vyūhas and Vidyeśvaras all taken together make up the Chaturviṃśatimūrtis of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu. In the Vyūha doctrine, Vāsudeva is invariably given the order of precedence, his elder brother Saṅkrshaṇa taking the second place as Vyūha of the younger brother. The four Vyūhas including the Vyūha Vāsudeva are the same as the five Vīras excluding Sāmba. Even when the number of these four primary forms is raised to 24 the inclusion of Sāmba is not considered, probably because of his association with the Iranian solar cult.

Thus it is obvious that the Vyūhas were the apotheosis of the Vṛṣṇi Vīras excluding Sāmba and therefore the philosophical theory which seeks to explain Vyūhas' relation with Vāsudeva should be later than the practice of the worship of the five Vṛṣṇi heroes. The Vyūha doctrine must have taken a pretty long time

<sup>1</sup>IA, 1908, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Bhatt, *op. cit.*, p. 38 f.

to attain its full form. It was not known to the author of the *Gītā*.<sup>1</sup> None of the Vyūha images so far discovered belongs to the Gupta period; most of them are assignable to the early and late medieval ages. Some scholars find the earliest reference to the Vyūha doctrine in the *Brahmasūtra*. But it should be noted that it is only in the later commentaries on it by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja that we find clear mention of the Vyūhavāda, and not in the *Brahmasūtra* itself.<sup>2</sup> The two gods mentioned in the Ghosundi inscription of the first century B.C. are Vīras, and not Vyūhas. In the Nanaghat cave inscription of Nāganikā also Śaṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva are probably mentioned as Vīras, and not as Vyūhas. It is probably the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali which contains the earliest allusion to the Chaturvyūha. While commenting on a sūtra of Pāṇini (VI.3.5) and explaining the form *ātmachaturtha* it cites *Janārdanasātmachaturtha eva* meaning 'Janardana with himself as the fourth'; but Banerjea does not feel that here there is a reference to the Chaturvyūha doctrine.<sup>3</sup> The first clear enunciation of the doctrine occurs in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.*

It seems that all the four Vyūhas were not always recognised in the cult. The Nārāyaṇīya itself clearly says so (*Mbh.* XII. 349. 57). It may be that originally only two Vyūhas were recognised; the number was raised to four later on. The Vyūha doctrine in its characteristic form does not occur in the Purāṇas also though all the four Vyūhas are mentioned by them as the members of the family of Kṛṣṇa; only rarely are they mentioned as the four forms of the deity. It appears that in the Gupta age the Vyūha doctrine was gradually displaced by the doctrine of incarnation.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Saṅkarshaṇa-Balarāma (Baladeva)*

Saṅkarshaṇa-Baladeva<sup>5</sup> appears in the *Mbh.* as a Vṛṣṇī warrior the son of Vasudeva and Rohiṇī. He is mentioned for the first time in the *Arthaśāstra*. It avers that his worshippers indulged

<sup>1</sup>Raychaudhuri finds a faint trace of the evolutionary process of the Vyūhas in the *Gītā* VII. 4.

<sup>2</sup>See Bhatt, S.R., 'Does Bādarāyaṇa favour Pāñcharātra', *Philosophical Quarterly*, April, 1965.

<sup>3</sup>Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 40 f.

<sup>4</sup>*EHVS*, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup>Jaiswal, S., *op. cit.*, p. 51 ff.



in some kind of sacrificial drinking. Although Saṅkarshaṇa appears as a Vaiṣṇava divinity in the *Mbh.* and the *Purāṇas*, there are traces of his close connection with snake worship. A *Mbh.* passage speaks of a great serpent Baladevan. The irascible temper of Saṅkarshaṇa-Baladeva, his drinking habits, his emblem of the palmyra leaf, the fact that he is regarded as an incarnation of Śeshanāga, and the story that a snake came out of his mouth at the time of his death—all these support Vogel's assertion that the mythical character of Baladeva evolved out of a nāga deity which was later absorbed into Kṛṣṇaism.

The *Purāṇas* and the *Pāñcharātra Saṁhitās* often identify Saṅkarshaṇa with Rudra-Śiva. The *Brahmāṇḍa P.* says that Rudra was known as Halāyudha (one who holds plough as his weapon, that is Saṅkarshaṇa) in one of his incarnations. The *Vishṇu P.* speaks of Saṅkarshaṇa-Rudra, who comes out of the mouth of Śeshanāga at the end of every aeon (*kalpānta*). It may also be pointed out that Śiva is also intimately associated with the nāgas, and Śiva and Saṅkarshaṇa both are known as *mūsalin* (weilder of pestle).

Another prominent feature of Saṅkarshaṇa is his association with agriculture. He holds the two characteristically agricultural weapons, the pestle (an implement for cleaning rice) and the plough. His name Saṅkarshaṇa itself literally means the act of ploughing or furrowing. According to Megasthenes when Dionysos came to India he taught the people of this country how to sow the land and it was he who first yoked oxen to the plough and made many Indians husbandmen and gave the people the seeds of cultivated plants. According to S. Jaiswal the description fits Saṅkarshaṇa well.

Saṅkarshaṇa is described as a great yogin and teacher also. The *Arthaśāstra* speaks of him as a deity of the ascetics with shaven head or braided hair. According to the *Mbh.* he expounded the Sātvata mode of worship at the end of the Dvāpara and the beginning of the Kali age. The *Vishṇudharmottara* equates him with knowledge, specially with the *Pāñcharātra* knowledge.

Nevertheless in the epic-Paurāṇika tradition Saṅkarshaṇa-Baladeva appears as a Vṛṣṇi hero, the elder brother of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. As Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa was specially worshipped by Arjuna, Baladeva-Saṅkarshaṇa was specially honoured by

Duryodhana. The Ghosundi inscription of the second-first century B.C. also brackets Saṅkarshaṇa with Vāsudeva. Patañjali mentions Baladeva and Vāsudeva among the Vṛshṇi names and speaks of Kṛṣṇa as second to Saṅkarshaṇa, thereby indicating their relationship. Some other epithets of Saṅkarshaṇa, such as Rauhiṇeya (the son of Rohiṇī), Lāṅgalin, (the wielder of the plough), and Rāma (Balarāma), are also mentioned in the *Mahābhāṣya*. But both the epigraphic and the literary sources also suggest that in the beginning Saṅkarshaṇa was in no way inferior to Vāsudeva. The Ghosundi inscription gives precedence to Saṅkarshaṇa over Vāsudeva in the compound *Saṅkarshaṇa-Vāsudevābhyaṁ* and describes him alongwith Vāsudeva as Bhagavat and Sarveśvara (the lord of all).<sup>1</sup> The Nanaghat record of Nāganikā invokes the two deities in a similar fashion. According to a passage of the *Mbh.* Saṅkarshaṇa was the incarnation of a white and Vāsudeva of a black hair of the supreme god Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu. Later on, with the development of the Vyūha doctrine Saṅkarshaṇa became subordinate to Vāsudeva and is invariably mentioned after him. Traditionally, Vishṇu is described as resting on the serpent Śeṣha lying on the waters. The myth also suggests the subordination of Saṅkarshaṇa to Vishṇu.

The Purāṇas describe Revatī, the unusually tall daughter of king Raivata, as the wife of Baladeva-Balarāma. In order to curb her height he bent her down with the point of his plough. A disease goddess Revatī is mentioned in the *Mbh.* and in the *Suśruta Saṁhitā* she is described as unusually tall, fierce and hunchbacked.

The worship of nāgas appears to have been very popular in the Mathurā region, and a large number of nāga statues have been found here. This region, therefore, became the stronghold of Saṅkarshaṇa worship. A stone idol of Saṅkarshaṇa attributed to the second century B.C. happens to be one of his earliest extant images. Two fan-palm capitals discovered among the ruins of Besnagar and one at Pawaya in the former state of Gwalior indicate the existence of the temples of Saṅkarshaṇa. The *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali also speaks of the temples of Balarāma and Keśava, and a passage occurring in the Buddhist *Niddesa* (first century B.C.) refers to the worshippers of Baladeva.

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, *Bhāratiya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*, p. 173 ff.

But references to Saṅkarshaṇa in the records of the post-Christian era are very few. The Nasik cave inscription probably of 149 A.D. compares Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi to Rāma (that is, Balarāma). He is also mentioned in the opening verse of the *Svapnavāsavadattā* of Bhāsa and the *Śīlapadikāram*, a work of the fifth-sixth century A.D., speaks of the existence of the temples of Baladeva.

### *Theory of Incarnation in Vaiṣṇavism*

The theory of incarnation is a fundamental Vaiṣṇava tenet which appears to have evolved with the identification of Nārāyaṇa with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. Thus the latter came to be looked upon as the human incarnation of the former. "The Vibhavas or the incarnatory forms of Vāsudeva-Vishṇu collectively stand for the third aspect of the one god of the Pāñcharātrins".<sup>1</sup> The theory of vibhavas or avatāras (incarnations) is much older than the *Gītā*, but it is certainly in this work that its classic exposition is found. However, its author does not specify the exact number of the avatāras; he only emphasises that the Lord incarnates himself age after age whenever occasion arises (vide p. 82f.). In the beginning the tendency was to incorporate different popular divinities such as Varāha (Boar), Narasiṃha (Man-Lion) and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa simply by recognising them as manifestations of the same god. Gradually the theory became a device by which divergent rituals, cults and sects with their theories and practices were deliberately brought together and harmonized into one religion. As a result of this, the totem worshippers, the animists, the hero-worshippers, all found a place in Vaiṣṇava religion.

Of the important and specific incarnations of Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu, the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* contains two lists, the first enumerating six, and the second only four avatāras. One of its ślokas listing the ten avatāras of the god is generally regarded as a late interpolation. However gradually, the number was increased.<sup>2</sup> In medieval and modern works the avatāras of Vishṇu are usually mentioned as ten (daśāvatāra), viz. Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha,

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, J.N., 'The Avatāras of Viṣṇu and Their Enumeration in Some Early Indian Texts', *R.K. Mookerji Commemoration Volume*, I.



Nṛsiṃha or Narasiṃha (Man-Lion), Vāmana, Paraśurama, Rāma (son of Daśaratha), Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalkin. The *Varāha* and *Matsya Purāṇas* mention these ten in this order.<sup>1</sup> The *Bhāgavata P.* at one place lays down that 'the avatāras are innumerable (*avatārā hyasaṃkheyāḥ*), but at other places it mentions 22 or 23 as the specific number.<sup>2</sup> The Pāñcharātra texts not only write about human and animal forms of divine incarnations, but also refer to His vegetable forms. The *Vishvakṣena Sāṃhitā* mentions the crooked mango tree of the Daṇḍaka forest as an instance of this class of incarnations.<sup>3</sup>

The *Sātvata* and the *Ahirbudhnya Sāṃhitās* enumerate 39 *vibhavas*: (1) Padmanābha, (2) Dhruva, (3) Ananta (obviously Balarāma), (4) Śaktyātman, (5) Madhusūdana, (6) Vidyādhīva, (7) Kapila, (8) Viśvarūpa, (9) Vihaṅgama, (10) Kroḍātman, (11) Baḍavāvaktra, (12) Dharma, (13) Vāgīśvara, (14) Ekārṇavaśāyin, (15) Kamaṭheśvara (obviously Kūrma), (16) Varāha, (17) Narasiṃha, (18) Piyūshaharaṇa, (19) Śrīpati, (20) Kāntātman, (21) Rāhujit, (22) Kālanemighna, (23) Pārijātabara, (24) Lokanātha, (25) Śāntātman (obviously Buddha), (26) Dattātreyā, (27) Nyagrodhaśāyin, (28) Ekaśṛṅgatanu (Matsya), (29) Vāmanadeha, (30) Tṛivikrama (also Vāmana), (31) Nara, (32) Nārāyaṇa, (33) Hari, (34) Kṛṣṇa, (35) Paraśurāma, (36) Rāma Dhanurdhara (Rāma Dāśarathi), (37) Vedavid, (38) Kalkin, and (39) Pātālaśayana. In this list one can recognise not only the ten stereotyped avatāras (Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāghava Rāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalkin), sometimes under different names, but also at least two vyūhas (Saṅkarshaṇa-Balarāma under the name of Ananta, and Pradyumna as Kāntātman), a few subvyūhas (such as Padmanābha, Madhusūdana and others), and possibly a few Vidyēśvaras.<sup>4</sup>

Antaryāmin and archā, the two other aspects of the Lord, are also regarded by the Pāñcharātrins, as avatāras. The *Vishvakṣena Sāṃhitā* lays down that the former is Aniruddha, the inner ruler

<sup>1</sup>Although the number of the main incarnations of Viṣṇu was fixed quite early as ten, their names vary in different lists. Some lists include the names Nārāyaṇa, Dattātreyā, Māndhātā, Vedavyāsa, Pṛthu-Vainya, etc. by deleting some of the names from the standard list given above.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Vāgīśvara and Lokanātha may or may not be the Mahāyāna deities of the same name.

of all embodied souls.<sup>1</sup> The archā or images of the vyūha and vibhava aspects of the Lord, which were object of great veneration and one-souled devotion (*ekātmikā bhakti*) were euphemistically described as the very *śrīvigrahas* (auspicious bodies—*tanu*, *vapu*, *bera*, etc.) of the Lord and his various forms.<sup>2</sup> The Śālagrāma stone, the approved emblem of the God, is worshipped in cases where images are not available. But the Śālagramas are not enshrined in the main sanctum which must contain an image (*vigraha*) of the Lord.

### *Incarnations of Viṣṇu : Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha*

According to many scholars the first few incarnations—Matsya (fish) Kūrma (tortoise), Varāha (boar), Nṛsimha (man-lion) and Vāmana (dwarf)—seem to indicate a gradual evolution. The next three incarnations, Paraśurāma, Rāma Dāśarathi and Kṛṣṇa belong to mythical epochs—the first two to Tretā and the last one to the end of Dvāpara. The Buddha is clearly a later addition, an attempt to include a historical figure in the list while Kalkin represents the hope of the devotees for the future.

The Fish incarnation is first mentioned in the *ŚB* where Manu is saved by a fish during the Deluge. The identity of the fish is not given in the *Brāhmaṇa*, but the *Mbh.* makes Prajāpati the fish. The Epic and *HV* lists of the incarnations do not include the fish. It is the Purāṇas which identify Manu's fish with Viṣṇu. Obviously the concept of the Fish incarnation was borrowed by the Vaiṣṇava sect from some tribe which had fish as its totem. The same appears to be the case with Kaśyāpa or tortoise incarnation. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions the cosmic tortoise as the incarnation of Prajāpati and the *Mbh.* knows the Tortoise who supported the earth on his back at the time of the churning of the ocean. But the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Mbh.* do not connect him with Viṣṇu. It is only in the Purāṇas that we hear of Viṣṇu's descent in the shape of

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* The *Nārada Pāñcharātra* lays down that Hari is to be always worshipped in the form of images and no Pāñcharātrin should stay or eat in a house or a village in which there are no *vigrahas* of the Lord. However the Pāñcharātrins had scant regard for the priests of their temples because they used images of god as means of their livelihood.

a tortoise to support Mount Mandara at the time of the churning of the ocean. The *Rāmā.* also identifies tortoise with Nārāyaṇa.

Varāha, the Boar incarnation, seems to have been originally a pre-Aryan cult of the sacred pig. The *RV* speaks of a Boar, hostile to the Aryans and killed by Indra, and the *TS* refers to a boar who kept the wealth of the asuras on the other side of the hills. He was smoten by Viṣṇu and was thus his adversary. The *ŚB* however refers to a boar named Emusha who raised the earth from the primeval waters, and identifies him with Prajāpati.<sup>1</sup> The *Mbh.*, *HV* and the Purāṇas mention the slaughter of demon Hiraṇyāksha by Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation. Gonda has discussed in detail the connection of the boar with fertility. The *Viṣṇudharmottara* prescribes the worship of the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu as a preliminary to agricultural operations. We have an iconographic representation of this incarnation in an Udayagiri cave of c. 400 and on a fifth century Bhitargaon plaque.

An inscription of the time of Budhagupta (476-95 A.D.) also speaks of the two gods Kokāmukhasvāmin and Śvetavarāhasvāmin. Raychaudhuri believes that both the gods refer to the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. The *Raghuvamśa* and the *Rāvaṇavaho* refer to the Mahāvarāha and the Ādivarāha forms of the god.

### *Narasimha and Vāmana*

With the exception of a late passage of the *TĀ* there is no reference to Narasimha in the Vedic literature though some elements of the legend of Narasimha avatāra may have been derived from the legends of Indra and the demon Namuchi. The *Mbh.*, *HV* and the Purāṇas introduce the legend of Narasimha avatāra. The *HV* relates that the gods requested Viṣṇu to destroy the demon king Hiraṇyakaśipu, the father of bhakta Prahlāda. Viṣṇu descended in the man-lion form and slew the demon king. the *Viṣṇudharmottara* prescribes his worship for removing all hindrances, pacifying the harmful effects of evil stars, and avoiding thieves and wild animals in the dark. The Narasimha-stotra and Narasimha-mantra are also regarded as efficacious for curing diseases and preventing calamities.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It is significant to note that in earlier texts all three--Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha—were regarded as the incarnations of Prajāpati (*Rāmakathā*, p. 147).

<sup>2</sup>Sarma, M.V. Sridatta, 'The Incarnation of the Man-Lion', *Vedānta Kesari*, LI, No. 2, 1964, pp. 185-91.



The *Vishṇudharmottara* places the Man-lion incarnation of the god in the Madra country and even to-day the worship of Narasiṃha is very popular in the Kangra region.

The Dwarf or Vāmana avatāra of Vishṇu seems to be a mythological elaboration of the story of his three steps mentioned in the *RV* (*supra*). According to it the demon king Bali conquered the whole world and threatened the gods. When the king was performing a sacrifice, Vishṇu assumed the form of a dwarf and begged as much land as he could measure in three strides. When Bali granted his request, Vishṇu magnified his dimensions, covered heaven, atmosphere and earth and pushed Bali into hell. The *Mbh.* relates that Aditi gave birth to the Ādityas of whom Vishṇu was a dwarf. But from his strides "the gods' prosperity increased and the demons were defeated". The *HV* includes the dwarf in its lists of incarnations and also narrates the story of the destruction of Bali. The Junagadh inscription of Skandagupta (455 A.D.) begins with an invocation to the Dwarf incarnation of Vishṇu. The dwarf legend perhaps hints at the suppression of the cult of Bali, for Varāhamihira gives instructions for making the cult images of king Bali.

The tripādavikrama, as this feat of Vishṇu is commonly known, is immortalized by the worship of his footprints in many forms.<sup>1</sup> At Gayā his supposed footprints are daily worshipped by pilgrims.

### *Paraśurāma*

As Paraśurāma and Rāma Dāśarathi, Vishṇu is made somewhat hostile to himself. As Paraśurāma, he descended to destroy Kārttavīrya Arjuna as also to annihilate the Kshatriyas as a class. And he did destroy the Kshatriyas twenty-one times. This action of his symbolizes the conflict between the Brāhmaṇas and the Kshatriyas. He was solidly on the side of the Brāhmaṇas. The Kshatriyas had become a threat to the Brāhmaṇical values; by extirpating them Paraśurāma saved these values. Banerjea calls him an Āveśāvatāra (temporarily possessed by Vishṇu).<sup>2</sup>

The apotheosis of Paraśurāma was the work of the Bhṛgu Brāhmaṇas, the redactors of the *Mbh.* Outside their circle he does not seem to have been much popular. His identification with

<sup>1</sup>Jaiswal, S., 'Foot Prints of Vishṇu', *PIHC*, 1964, p. 90f.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 419 f.

Vishṇu occurs only once in the *Mbh.*, otherwise he appears simply as a great legendary hero. However, his glorification, as Sukthankar has shown, was not approved by a section of the Brāhmaṇas, who were the custodians of the *Rāmā*. This Epic, invariably presents the Bhārgavas, including Paraśurāma in an unfavourable light. It relates the defeat of Paraśurāma at the hands of Dāśarathi Rāma, a greater incarnation of the same god. In the words of Banerjea the avatārahood left Paraśurāma as soon as Dāśarathi Rāma appeared on the scene, and passed on to the latter.

### *Dāśarathi Rāma*

As Rāmachandra, son of Daśaratha, Vishṇu came down to destroy Rāvaṇa, the demon king of Laṅkā. His story as narrated in the *Rāmā*. is unknown to the Vedic literature. As shown by Father Bulcke,<sup>1</sup> though the *RV* refers to Ikshvāku, Daśaratha and Rāma, yet there is nothing to show that they had any thing to do with the characters of the *Rāmā*. However the Rāma story has much in common with the Vedic tales of demon-killing.<sup>2</sup> His mighty adversary Rāvaṇa, made almost invincible through divine boons, is a parallel of Viṭra and Namuchi. The agricultural associations of these gods are preserved in Sītā, literally the furrow, who is an important agricultural goddess in the *Gṛhya sūtras*. She was the daughter of the plough-bannered (Sīradhvaja) Janaka. Janaka found her in *sītā* or furrow; hence she was called Sītā. She was *ayonijā* (not born from the womb), and she did not die but returned to the womb of earth.

The avatārahood of Rāma is not mentioned in the *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali or any inscription of the pre-Christian period. However, the popularity and ethical nature of the Rāma legends made Rāma eminently suitable for the role of an incarnation of Vishṇu which finds mention for the first time<sup>3</sup> in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa and the Purāṇas. In the *Daśaratha Jātaka* he figures as a Bodhisattva. Its story differs from that of Vālmiki on some very important points. It

<sup>1</sup>Bulcke, *Rāmakathā*, 1962, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>For the identity of Rāma and Indra-Parjanya see Jacobi, *Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 131, 134; also see Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 161 f.

<sup>3</sup>According to Bulcke from the first century B.C. (*op. cit.*, p. 149).

speaks of Daśaratha as a king of Vārāṇasī (not Ayodhyā) and makes Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā, children of the first wife of Daśaratha, and Bharata their step-brother. The *Anāmaka jāta*, which was translated into Chinese in 251 A.D. shows acquaintance with his story. The *Daśaratha Kathānam*, which was translated into Chinese in 472 A.D. and is in remarkable agreement with the *Rāmā.*, attributes to him the prowess of Nārāyaṇa. In the *Rāmā.* Rāma appears as an incarnation of Viṣṇu only in the Bālakāṇḍa and the Uttarakāṇḍa and some other passages which are generally regarded as later additions. Elsewhere he is usually depicted as an ideal hero (cf. *supra*, p. 98-9).<sup>1</sup>

### *Buddha, Kalkin and Others*

*Kṛṣṇa* is a *pūrṇāvatāra*, the total incarnation of Viṣṇu, unlike the others who represent him only partially (*aṁśāvatāra*); the concept of the *pūrṇāvatāra* of Rāma was a later development.<sup>2</sup> *Kṛṣṇa* is the divine hero of the *Mbh.* as Rāma is of the *Rāmā.* We have discussed the avatārahood of *Kṛṣṇa* in the preceding Chapter.

During the Gupta period the popular mind identified the Buddha with Nārāyaṇa. It was partly the result of a deliberate attempt on the part of the Brāhmaṇas to absorb Buddhism, and partly of the movement which was rooted in those social conditions which had brought Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism nearer.

However, the identification of the Buddha was not at first favourably received by the Vaiṣṇavas who put forward the view that Viṣṇu incarnated himself as Māyāmoha (Buddha) in order to preach wrong doctrines to and bring about the destruction of those who are opposed to the orthodox tradition. Orthodox writers such as Kumārila did not recognise the Buddha incarnation of Nārāyaṇa, and the *Vṛddha Hārīta Smṛti* explicitly forbids the worship of the Buddha. However, in the *Ahīrbudhnya Sāṁhitā*, the Buddha is mentioned as Śāntātman. In the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva it is said that Nārāyaṇa incarnated himself as the Buddha out of compassion for animals.

Kalkin was recognised as the tenth incarnation fairly early. The legend of Kalkin Viṣṇuyaśas is narrated in the *Āraṇyaka-*

<sup>1</sup>Bulcke, *Rāmakathā*, Prayāga, 1962, p. 129 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. Cit.*, p. 742.



parvan of the *Mbh.* It is supposed that he will appear at the end of the Kali age on a horse-back to uproot the Mlechchhas and establish the dharma. His conception may have been inspired by the idea of Maitreya, the future Buddha. In the Purāṇas he became the symbol of the ultimate triumph of Brāhmaṇism. Some scholars believe that a few features of his legend are based on some actual historical events.

*Balarāma*, also known as Saṅkarshaṇa, Ananta and Haladhara is a comparatively obscure hero in the *Mbh.* We have discussed him in detail in a preceding section.

*Dattātreyā* also appears to have been an important incarnation of Viṣṇu. He is mentioned in several early lists. The Purāṇas represent him as a forester given to strong liquor, surrounded by women and always in a state of ecstasy. Probably he was originally a god of some semi-civilized tribe. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* it is said that he should be worshipped with the offerings of meat, wine, perfume and garlands to the accompaniment of music. He is also regarded as the author of several Tāntrika texts.

#### *Viṣṇu's Female Partners*

A number of goddesses have been associated with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. In the *AV* (V. 7, 47) *Sinīvalī* is explicitly called Viṣṇu's consort. Sometimes *Sarasvatī* is also his wife. In the later North and North-Eastern reliefs *Śrī* and *Puṣṭi* are almost invariably shown as his principal companions while in the South Indian ones the place of *Puṣṭi* is taken by *Bhūdevī* (*Prṭhivī*). The *Baudhāyana D.S.* includes *Śrī*, *Sarasvatī*, *Tuṣṭi* and *Puṣṭi* among the goddesses of the Vaishṇava pantheon. In some text *Nīlādevī* is also mentioned as the consort of Viṣṇu but she is not worshipped independently and her images are not found.<sup>1</sup>

The association of *Śrī-Lakṣmī* with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa is related in the *Śrī Sūkta* of the Khila section of the *RV* which in the edition of Max Müller contains twenty-nine hymns. But this association is mentioned in the *Sūkta* after the fifteenth hymn while all its hymns after the fifteenth are regarded as later interpolations.<sup>2</sup> The *Agni*

<sup>1</sup>Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>The 16th verse of this *Sūkta* is a *phalaśruti* and according to some ancient texts the *Sūkta* contained only 15 verses (Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 102).

*Purāṇa* explicitly states that only its first fifteen hymns belong to the *RV*.<sup>1</sup> From the available evidence it appears that the concept that Śrī-Lakshmī is the wife of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa became popular not earlier than the time of the later sections of the *Mbh.* In them she is described as the wife of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. Similarly, the wives of his human incarnations (such as Sītā the wife of Rāma, Rukmiṇī, the wife of Kṛṣṇa, etc.) are regarded as the incarnations of Śrī-Lakshmī. In the *Mbh.* at one place Śrī tells Rukmiṇī that she lives in spirit with everyone excepting those who cause intermixture of castes and neglect varṇa duties; but with Nārāyaṇa she dwells in embodied form. In the *Rāmā.*, the *Viṣṇu P.*, other *Purāṇas*, several other ancient texts such as the *Raghuvamśa*, the *Amarakośa* as well the inscriptions of the Gupta age<sup>2</sup> she is usually mentioned as the wife of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu. The *Jayākhyā Saṁhitā* mentions Viṣṇu as *Kamalākāmuka* and *Lakshmīvallabha*. The *Viṣṇudharmottara* prescribes that the two-armed images of Lakshmī should be placed by the side of Viṣṇu while his four-armed images are to be established independently.

Following Sister Nivedita Raychaudhuri opines that the enthronement of Lakshmī by the side of Nārāyaṇa and the prominence given to the Gupta queens in the same period indicate "the assertion of the rights of women".<sup>3</sup> But S. Jaiswal rightly disagrees with this opinion and relates the phenomenon of the acceptance of Śrī-Lakshmī as the wife of Viṣṇu with the subordination of the Lakshmī cult to that of Viṣṇu and the impact of the Sāṁkhya doctrine of Prakṛti-Purusha duality on Vaishṇavism.<sup>4</sup> The Vaishṇava texts mention Śrī-Lakshmī as the Śakti of Viṣṇu through whom he performs the task of creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe. The *Viṣṇudharmottara* describes Lakshmī as Vaishṇavīśakti and equates Viṣṇu and Śrī with Purusha and Prakṛti. The *Ahīrbudhnyā Saṁhitā* (sixth century A.D.) identifies Lakshmī as energy of Viṣṇu through which he carries on his cosmological activities.<sup>5</sup> Whether or not she had her own separate cult is difficult to say. J.N. Banerjea says that she

<sup>1</sup>Dasgupta, S. B., *Śrī Rādhā kā Kramavikāśa*, in Hindi, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Goyal, S. R., *Guptakālīna Abhilekha*, Meerut, 1984, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>*EHVS*, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup>Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup>For references vide, Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-9.

did not have, but the *Milindapañho* seems to refer to a distinct sect of this goddess.<sup>1</sup>

### Origin and Nature of Śrī-Lakshmī

Śrī and Lakshmī were originally two different goddesses. The *Vājasaneyī Samhitā* (XXXI.22) speaks of them as two wives of Purusha. In the *TĀ* (III.13.2) the two wives of Purusha are named as Hrī and Śrī. Later on in the Brāhmaṇa-Upanishad period Śrī and Lakshmī were identified. The Śrī Sūkta of the *RV* composed in the Middle Vedic Age is the earliest text eulogising Śrī whom it also calls Lakshmī. In the Epics and other later works these two names are used indiscriminately for the same goddess. In the Śāntiparvan of the *Mbh.* Śrī explicitly says that she is also known as Lakshmī. But quite often their separate identity was also recalled, for the Epics sometimes refer to them as different goddesses (e.g. *Rāmā.* III. 46.17).

J. Gonda explains the appellation Lakshmī as 'mark', 'sign', 'token' and opines that she originally represented *lakshman* (derived from *laksh*, 'to know by means of characteristics or signs', evidence of prognostication of luck and prosperity).<sup>2</sup> As regards Śrī, Oldenberg<sup>3</sup> took it in the sense of 'beauty', and 'splendour' while in the opinion of some German scholars<sup>4</sup> she was a goddess of fertility of pre-Aryan origin. Her name Śrī has been derived from the same root from which the Latin name Ceres, the corn goddess, is derived. The Śrī Sūkta describes her as of moist nature (*ādrā*), ever-nourished (*nityapushṭā*) and abounding in cowdung (*karishinī*). She is said to have produced offsprings through mire (*kardama*) and is described as living in a lotus (*padmesthitā*) and of the colour of a lotus (*padmavarṇā*).<sup>5</sup> According to Coomaraswamy lotus is also a symbol of water and as such it connects her with fertility. Similarly the *TĀ* states that she is a *mṛtikābhīmānī devatā* and connects her with fertility. Her association with vegetation is also shown by the fact that *bilva* or *śrīphala* is regarded as

<sup>1</sup>Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Gonda, J., *AEV*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Motichandra, *JUPHS*, XXI, 1948, p. 19-20.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Gonda, *AEV*, pp. 212-3, for references.

<sup>5</sup>*The Eastern Art*, I, p. 178.



specially hers. Gonda therefore feels that she was originally the guardian deity of the farmers.<sup>1</sup>

Śrī-Lakshmī is also associated with kine. In the Śrī Sūkta she is called *harinī* and on some Kuṇḍa coins she appears with a deer by her side.<sup>2</sup> According to a legend she left the asuras because they did not look after their kine properly. In the *Mbh.* she is said to dwell in the urine and dung of the kine.

As the goddess related with fertility and kine Śrī-Lakshmī was bound to be popular with herdsmen-agriculturist masses and their leaders, the merchants and traders, who taken together comprised the third varṇa of the Hindu society. And once she was accepted as the goddess of corn and cattle, that is wealth in those days, her cult began to attract all sections of society and she was conceived in all possible forms such as Brāhmīśrī (the śrī of holy men) Rājyaśrī (the royal glory), Dhanalakshmī (the goddess of riches), Nagarakshmī (goddess of city), Gṛhalakshmī, Vāṇijyalakshmī<sup>3</sup>, Svargalakshmī, Jayalakshmī, etc. But as she was primarily considered to be the goddess of wealth and as wealth does not stay with anyone for long, she earned the dubious distinction of being regarded as fickle-minded (*chañchalā*). However her abstract name 'Śrī' helped her in associating herself with many abstract qualities as Hṛī (modesty), Medhā (talent), Dhṛti (patience), Pushṭi (sustenance), Kshānti (forgiveness), Lajjā (bashfulness), Kīrti (fame), Bhūti (prosperity), Rati (love), etc.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Buddhist legends Śrī-Lakshmī was the daughter of Dhataratṭha.<sup>5</sup> The *Śatapatha* makes her the daughter of Prajāpati and the *Mbh.* of Brahmā. In the *Mbh.* she is also described as the daughter of Daksha, the wife of Dharma and the mother of Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ.<sup>6</sup> In the Śāntiparvan, however, it is recorded

<sup>1</sup>AEV, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Lahiri, Bela, 'Lakṣmī on Early Indian Coins', *Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature*, (FAI, LSAL), ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 126-31.

<sup>3</sup>Mukhopadhyaya, M., 'Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in Sanskrit Inscriptions', FAI, LSAL, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>CA, p. 452.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Haldar, J.R., 'Lakṣmī in Pāli Literature', FAI, LSAL, pp. 142-4.

<sup>6</sup>Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 96. In the *Vishnu P.* she is called the sister of Dhātā and Vidhātā.

that she was born from a golden coloured lotus which sprang from Viṣṇu's forehead. She is also regarded as the daughter of Bhṛgu who promulgated the first code of sacred ordinances.<sup>1</sup> But the best known legend of her origin is that she arose when the ocean of milk was churned by gods and demons to procure *amṛta* (nectar). According to the *Mbh* she came out of the ocean along with soma (moon), *surā* (wine), *apsarās*, *Airāvata*, *Uchchaiśravas*, *Kalpa-vrksha* or *Pārijāta*, the jewel *Kaustubha*, *kālakūṭa* (poison) and *Dhanvantri* who carried the nectar pot in his hand.<sup>2</sup>

Śrī-Lakṣmī is characterised by certain non-Aryan features also. Her association with elephants is one of them. In some of her earliest representations on coins and seals<sup>3</sup> she appears in the *Gaja-Lakṣmī* form.<sup>4</sup> In the Śrī Sūkta she is described as exulting at the sound of elephants (*hastināda pramodinī*). In the *Samudramanthana* legend when she emerges out of ocean she is bathed by the elephants of quarters (*Viṣṇu P.*, II.9.102). According to S. Jaiswal as the Sanskrit word *nāga* means both elephant and serpent and was used as the appellation of a non-Aryan tribe also, it may be surmised that the cult of the mother-goddess, who was associated with the *nāgas*, originally belonged to some non-Aryan tribe.<sup>5</sup> According to a *Mbh.* (XIII.81.6) legend Śrī first lived with *asuras* and came to live with *Indra* after the degradation of the former as a result of which they were destroyed. Elsewhere the Epic (*Mbh.* XII.124.54-60) says that assuming the form of a *Brāhmaṇa* *Indra* begged Śrī from the demon king *Prahlāda* and as soon as *Prahlāda* agreed to the request, Śrī left the *daityas*. Her contact with the *asuras* is further emphasized by her association with *Kubera*, the lord of the *asuras*.

### *Syncretistic Nature of Śrī-Lakṣmī*

Like *Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu* Śrī-Lakṣmī was also a syncretistic

<sup>1</sup>Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup>There are found some variations in the Epic and Paurāṇika versions of this myth. For its detailed analysis vide Chatterji, B., 'The Story of *Samudramanthana*', *JAIH*, V, pp. 56-77.

<sup>3</sup>Thaplyal, K. K., 'Gaja Lakṣmī on Seals', *Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature*, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 112-125.

<sup>4</sup>Lahiri, Bela, 'Lakṣmī on Early Indian Coins', *FAI, LSAL*, pp. 126-31.

<sup>5</sup>Jaiswal, S., *op. cit.*, p. 91.

deity. She acquired features of many tribal and local goddesses and also of the divinities of other sects. Some similarity between the Ṛgvedic Ushā and later Lakshmī has been noticed by scholars. Ushā was the wife of sun and Lakshmī was also conceived as the wife of a solar god Vishṇu. Like Ushā Lakshmī is also beautiful, clothed in red, ever fresh and benefactor of humanity.<sup>1</sup> Ushā has a sister in Nakta or Night; Lakshmī has in Alakshmī (poverty or grief).<sup>2</sup> According to M. Foucher in the Buddhist literature she is mentioned as Māyā, the mother of the Buddha.<sup>3</sup> A set of fourteen Jaina symbols appearing in the dreams of Trīśālā and Devānandā are closely associated with Śrī also. The symbols are elephant, bull, lion, anointing of Śrī-Lakshmī, garland, moon, sun, flag, vase, lotus-lake, ocean, celestial abode, heap of jewels and a flame. Śrī was included among Yakshiṇīs also. The Śrī Sūkta mentions her relationship with Kubera and Yaksha Maṇibhadra. At Bharhut also Sirimā appears with Yakshiṇīs.

The *HV* (III.12.4) equates Śrī Lakshmī with Pṛthivī. She shares the symbol of *makara* with other river goddesses. According to the *Linga P.* and the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* the various synonyms of the Devī are Durgā, Chaṇḍī, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī and Mahākālī. B.N. Mukherjee has shown that the syncretism of Umā-Śrī with some foreign goddesses was also achieved in the Kushāṇa period. The *Āṅgavijjā*,<sup>4</sup> a Prakrit text of the Kushāṇa age, lists Śrī and Lachchhī (Lakshmī) not only with the Indian goddesses Sītā and Bhagavatī but also with foreign goddesses such as Apalā (Greek goddess Pallas Athene), Aṇādītā (Avestan goddess Anahita), Airāṇī (Roman goddess Irene), Itimisakesi (Greek goddess Artemis) and Sālimālinī (Selene, the moon goddess). In the Gupta Age the goddess Pishtapurī or Pishtapuri-kādevī, probably originally the goddess of Pishtapura (mod. Pīthāpuram in Tamilnad), who is mentioned in two inscriptions of

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, Sukumari, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 163; the idea has been elaborated by S. Dhawan ('Ṛgvedic Uṣā and Her Transformation as Śrī', *Rhythm of History*, I, 1973-74, pp. 33-42). Cf. also Chaudhary, M. N., 'The Mother Goddess Conception in the Vedic Literature', *Indian Culture*, VIII, 1941, p. 77 ff.

<sup>2</sup>CA, p. 452.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Motichandra, 'Studies in the Cult of Mother Goddess in Ancient India,' *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India*, No. 12, 1973, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7 ff.



529 and 534 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> was identified with Lakshmī.<sup>2</sup> Durgā and Lakshmī were also intimately related with each other. The *Vishṇudharmottara* (III.8.4) includes Devī and Vibhāvarī among the names of Lakshmī; these were originally applied to Durgā. On some Gupta coins Lakshmī is shown seated on a lion (*simhavāhinī*) though traditionally lion is the vāhana of Durgā.<sup>3</sup> In a Khajuraho image also couchant lion is depicted below the seat of a four-armed Lakshmī. In the month of Āśvin on the last day of Kṛṣṇapaksha ceremonies are held in honour of both Lakshmī and Bhavānī.<sup>4</sup> Even Skanda's wife Devasenā has Lakshmī as one of her names. Identification of Lakshmī with Ekānamśā is also not unknown.

#### *Association of Śrī-Lakshmī with other Gods*

In the Śrī Sūkta Śrī is associated with Agni Jātaveda. But in the early period of her history she was more intimately associated with Indra, probably because at that time Indra was the mightiest of all gods. In a passage of the *Mbh.* Draupadī is described as the incarnation of Śrī and the five Pāṇḍavas of the former Indras. At one time Śrī was linked with Kārttikeya also.<sup>5</sup> In the Epics she is associated with the Suparṇas who are marked with Śrīvatsa (*Mbh.* V. 99.5) and with Varuṇa (*Rāmā.* VII. 56.2). In the Brāhmaṇical mythology, Kubera is also associated with Lakshmī or Śrī, the deity of the Ashtanidhis; in later periods, he claimed her to be his wife.<sup>6</sup> The Buddhist counterpart of Kubera is Jambhala whose wife, according to the Mahāyāna tradition, is Vasudharā who is the Buddhist adaptation of the earth goddess Bhūmi or Pṛthivī, another wife of Viṣṇu.

Several festivals are held in honour of Śrī-Lakshmī. One is held on the pañchamī of the Śuklapaksha of Māgha when she is identified with Sarasvatī, though in literature and inscriptions it is

<sup>1</sup>Fleet, *Corpus*, III, Nos. 25 and 30.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 113-4, 130; Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup>Dikshit, R. K., 'Simhavāhinī Lakshmī', *JNSI*, XXVI, p. 102 f.

<sup>4</sup>*PIHC*, 1960, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup>Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>6</sup>*CA*, p. 452.



usually stated that there is an inborn hostility between Lakshmī, the goddess of wealth, and Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning<sup>1</sup> (as worldly riches and learning are rarely found with one person).<sup>2</sup> In the festival of Dīpāvalī celebrated on the last day of the Kṛṣṇa-paksha of the month of Kārttika, she is specially worshipped with Gaṇeśa.

The Buddhist Sirimā is represented in the early art of Bharhut Sāñchī, Bodhagayā, etc. either as standing or seated on a lotus and being bathed by two elephants. The seals from Basarh, Bhita, Nalanda, Rajghat, Ahichchhatrā and Eran and also those of the kings of Śarabhapura and Tripurī as well as the coins from Kauśāmbī, Ayodhyā, Ujjayinī Mathurā and Pañchāla etc. and those of some of the foreign rulers portray the Gajalakshmī device. Śrī-Lakshmī continued to appear on the Gupta coins as well as on post-Gupta issues in various poses and forms. The carved stone discs depicting the mother-goddess found from Murtazaganj, Kauśāmbī, Vārāṇasī and other sites throw welcome light on the cult aspects of Lakshmī which literature fails to enlighten.

#### *Stages in the Progress of Vaishṇavism : pre-Gupta Period*

The religion taught by Kṛṣṇa, which ultimately coalesced with several Brāhmaṇical and popular cults to form the great federation or religions known as Vaishṇavism, seems to have been first adopted by his own Yādava-Vṛshṇi tribe, especially by its Sātvata sept to which he himself belonged. In the Śāntiparvan we often find the name Sātvata used as a synonym for Bhāgavata without any ethnic significance whatever. In the Tusam Rock Inscription of the fourth or fifth century A.D.<sup>3</sup> an Āryya-Sātvata-Yogāchāryya is mentioned.

It is a noticeable fact that the Bhāgavatas are almost wholly ignored or given no particular prominence in the early Buddhist inscriptions and literature but are constantly mentioned from the time of Pāṇini onwards in the records of the western part of

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Goyal, S. R., *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>In *Mahāummagga Jātaka* the Buddha refutes this idea (cf. *FAI*, *LSAL*, p. 14).

<sup>3</sup>Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 270.

Northern India. The *Anguttara Nikāya* mentions the Ājīvikas, the Nigaṇṭhas or Jainas, the Muṇḍa-Sāvakas, the Jaṭīlakas, the Paribbājakas, the Māgandikas, the Tedaṇḍikas, the Aviruddhakas, the Gotamakas and the Devadhammikas,<sup>1</sup> but never the Vāsudevakas and the Ārjunakas. The Seventh Pillar Edict of Aśoka, which mentions the Brāhmaṇas, the Ājīvikas and the Nigaṇṭhas is silent about the Bhāgavatas. There is only a solitary reference to the worshippers of Vāsudeva and Baladeva in a passage of the *Niddesa* which mentions the Vāsudevakas alongwith the worshippers of birds, beasts etc. (*supra*, p. 97 f.).

In the western and north-western parts of India the situation is different. Pāṇini's reference to the worshippers of Vāsudeva and Arjuna in a sūtra of his *Āṣṭādhyāyī* (IV.3.98) is one of the earliest mentions of the exclusive worshippers of Vāsudeva and Arjuna. We have discussed the evidence of Pāṇini in detail in Chapters 4 and 7. The Classical authors also inform that the army of Porus carried images of Heracles (here most likely they refers to Kṛṣṇa) though the Heracles mentioned in connection with Mathurā by Megasthenes reminds one of Manu Vaivasvata (pp. 181-7). However, it does not mean that Bhāgavatism was not known in the Mathurā region when the Greek ambassador came. On the contrary his reference to Kṛṣṇapura indicates to its popularity there.

The next stage in the progress of Vaishṇavism is seen in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* which mentions the names of Svaphalka, Chaitraka and Ugrasena as belonging to the Andhaka clan and those of Vāsudeva, Baladeva and Vishvaksena to the Vṛṣṇi group, both evidently belonging to the same tribe. Further, he alludes to Satyabhāmā, one of the chief queens of Kṛṣṇa, the names the followers of Akrūra and Vāsudeva, Vāsudeva's fight with his maternal uncle Kāṁsa, and the latter's defeat and destruction at the hands of the former. Patañjali also notes that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was the younger brother of Saṅkarshaṇa. Two other names of Baladeva-Saṅkarshaṇa viz. Rāma and Rauhiṇeya, and the name Keśava of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa were also known to him. He also refers to the temples that were erected for Dhanapati (the Yaksha king Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa), Rāma (Saṅkarshaṇa-Baladeva) and Keśava (Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa).

<sup>1</sup>*Dialogues of the Buddha*, I, p. 220.

By the beginning of the first century Bhāgavatism had certainly overstepped the boundaries of the Mathurā region and had entered Rajasthan, Malwa and Maharashtra, as the Ghosundi inscription of Sarvatāta, the Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus and the Nanaghat inscription of Nāganikā prove.

Some years ago were discovered some rare silver coins of the Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles bearing the figures of *Chakradhara* Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma who is shown as bearing *hala* and *mūsala*. A four-armed image of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva bearing conch, sword, *chakra* and *godā* was found at Malhar. According to K.D. Bajpai it is the earliest image of Vāsudeva so far discovered.<sup>1</sup>

### *Spread of Vaishṇavism in North India in the Gupta Age*

In the Kushāṇa age Vaishṇavism did not make much progress though some Kushāṇa rulers adopted the name Vāsudeva for themselves. In a large number of epigraphs of the Gupta age Viṣṇu is mentioned only as Bhagavat without any reference to his name. In the Eran inscription of 484 A.D. the god is called Janārdana. The god Chāṅgu-Nārāyaṇa, i.e. Nārāyaṇa on Chāṅgu or Garuḍa, was worshipped in Nepal before king Mānadeva's inscription of 464 A.D.<sup>2</sup> The Gupta emperors styled themselves as Paramabhāgavata and made Garuḍa their dynastic emblem, King 'Chandra' mentioned in the Meharauli inscription raised an iron-made Viṣṇudhvaja in the honour of Viṣṇu at Viṣṇu-padagiri.<sup>3</sup> In the various Gupta inscriptions different legends such as pārijātaharaṇa, are alluded to and the god is represented as the troubler of the demons called Puṇyajana, as the supporting pillar of the three worlds (in the Varāha or Kūrma form), as the slayer of the demons Madhu and Mura, and as the bearer of *chakra*, *gadā*, the bow of horn and the sword called Nandaka, and as the wearer of the jewel known as Kaustubha and the garland of lotuses. The Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta refers to Kṛṣṇa

<sup>1</sup>Bajpai, K. D., 'Sāttvata-Vaishṇava Dharma ke Mahān Srota—Śrī Kṛṣṇa', *Prof. Baladeva Upādhyāya Abhinandana Grantha*, Allahabad, 1983, pp. 101-9; Bajpai and Pandey, *Malhara*, 1975-8, Sagar, 1978, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājānitika aurā Samskr̥tika Itihāsa*, Varanasi, 1973, p. 168 f.

<sup>3</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālīna Abhilekha*, p. 79 f.



approaching his mother Devakī after having slain his enemies.<sup>1</sup> The Gangdhar inscription of 423 A.D., which speaks of a worshipper of Viṣṇu building a temple, full of the Dākinīs, points to the influence of the Tāntrika cult of the mother-goddess on the Vaishṇavas.<sup>2</sup> In the fifth century, the Maukhari chief Anantavarman installed an image of Kṛṣṇa in one of the caves in the Nāgarjunī hill.

*Vaishṇavism in North India : post-Gupta Developments : the Emergence of Śrī Rādhā*

The popularity of Vaishṇavism in North Indian royal dynasties declined in the post-Gupta age. Toramāṇa, Mihirakula, Yaśodharman and Harsha—all these were Śaivas. In the Pratihāra dynasty only Devaśakti and Bhoja II were Paramavaishṇavas. In other dynasties also kings who described themselves as Vaishṇava are fewer in number in comparison to kings professing their faith in Śaivism.

The doctrines of Vaishṇavism underwent significant changes in the post-Pratihāra period. The most important of them was the increasing dominance of the Gopālaka aspect of Kṛṣṇa's personality and the popularity of his amorous dalliances (*rāsakrīḍā* etc.) with gopīs, particularly with Rādhā, the wife of a near-relation. The *Bhāgavata P.* is the store-house of these legends. The emergence of the Rādhā concept was destined to bring about a great transformation in the nature of popular Vaishṇavism. The origin of the Rādhā concept is enveloped in mystery. J.C. Roy has advanced astronomical theory of her origin while some others identify her with Nappinnāi or Punnāi mentioned in the *Śilappadikāram* as the wife of Mayavana, the younger brother of Balarāma. They were worshipped by milkmaids and danced with pleasure the *kuruvai* dance (the southern counterpart of the north Indian *rāsa*). But Rādhā is not mentioned by name in any early text<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālīna Abhilekha*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 344 ff.

<sup>3</sup>The only work of the pre-Pratihāra period which refers to Rādhā is the *Gāhāsattasai* of Hāla. It mentions Rādhā in one of its *gāthās*. But this work contains many *gāthās* of a very late and uncertain date. Therefore its evidence is of no historical value specially in view of the fact that no other early work mentions her.



including the *Bhāgavata P.*, though later Vaishṇavas sought to find a covert allusion to her in one of its verses in which Kṛṣṇa vanishes with a gopī while other gopīs enviously feel that he must have been propitiated (*anayārādhitah*) by her (X.30.14).<sup>1</sup> But as pointed out A.K. Majumdar and others in the *Bhāgavata* Kṛṣṇa's relations with the gopīs are with their 'entire corporate body' and the later explanation that Rādhā was the chief gopī is foreign to the spirit of the *Bhāgavata*.<sup>2</sup> However, within a few centuries the concept of Rādhā became highly popular and the author of the *Brahma-vaiivarta P.* even invented the legend of her marriage with Kṛṣṇa, though it admits that she was much older than him.<sup>3</sup>

The most poetic and also the most realistic description of the amorous relations of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā is given in the *Gītāgovinda* of Jayadeva (12th century). It is a highly venerated poem and the Vaishṇavas explain its erotic elements away as allegorical or symbolical representations of the highest spiritual ideals.<sup>4</sup>

### *Growth of Rāma Cult*

At the present day the cult of Rāma is widely popular in India and even abroad, but its growth was actually an early medieval phenomenon. It is true that Rāma was regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu from the very early times (*supra*, p. 221 f.) but the cult of Rāma came into existence, according to R.G. Bhandarkar, in about the 11th century A.D.<sup>5</sup> According to Schrader also the Vaishṇava Saṁhitās, which speak of the *ekāntika bhakti* of Rāma, were composed later as a result of the influence of the Pāñcharātra literature.<sup>6</sup> However it must be admitted that worship of Rāma was quite well-known in the Gupta age. The *Vishṇudharmottara* and the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* give

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Kṛṣṇavallabhā Śrīrādhā kā Āvirbhāva', *Bhāratī*, Bombay, 1965, pp. 55-9.

<sup>2</sup>Majumdar, A.K., *ABORI*, XXXVI, pp. 236 and 250.

<sup>3</sup>For a historical and cultural study of the origin and development of the Rādhā concept vide, Majumdar, B.B., *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, Ch. V; Upadhyaya, B., *Bhāratīya Vāṅgamaya men Śrīrādhā*, Patna, 1963; Dasgupta, S.B., *Śrīrādhā ka Kramavikāsa*, Varanasi, 1956; Majumdar, A.K., 'A Note on the Development of the Rādhā Cult', *ABORI*, XXXVI, 1955, pp. 231-57.

<sup>4</sup>*The Struggle for Empire*, p. 436.

<sup>5</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>Bulcke, C., *Rāmakathā*, p. 154; Cf. also Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 105.

rules for making the images of Rāma.<sup>1</sup> Prabhāvatīguptā, the Vākātaka queen, is mentioned as the devotee of Rāmagirisvāmin. According to Bulcke the cult of Rāma grew in the South. The earliest hymns of the Ālvārs mention Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Rāmānuja makes a special mention of Rāmāvatāra in his *Śrībhāṣya*. The *Agastya Saṁhitā*, *Kalirāghava*, *Bṛhadrāghava* and *Rāghaviya-saṁhitā* of the Śrī Vaishṇava sect propound *dāsyabhakti* of Rāma. Several sectarian Upanishads—*Rāmapūrvatāpanīya*, *Rāmottaratāpanīya* and *Rāmarahasys* are concerned with the worship of Rāma. The *Rāmagītā*, composed after the pattern of the *Bhagavadgītā* advocates the *paramabrahmahood* of Rāma.

An important medieval development in the Rāma cult was the introduction of eroticism in it.<sup>2</sup> The *bālalīlā* of Rāma described in the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, his *muralīdhara* form and his *rāsālīlā* supposedly performed by him at Ayodhyā and Chitrakūṭa and described in several medieval works were certainly the result of the influence on the Rāma bhakti of the erotic devotion (*mādhurya bhakti*) developed in the Kṛṣṇa cult.<sup>3</sup>

### *Spread of Vaishṇavism in the Deccan and South India*

The prevalence of the worship of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarshaṇa in the Deccan is first mentioned in the Nanaghat inscription of Nāganikā.<sup>4</sup> In the second century A.D. Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi is described in a Nasik record as equal to Rāma (Balarāma) and Keśava.<sup>5</sup> In the same century the Chinna inscription begins with the adoration of Vāsudeva while the early Pallava charters refer to a *devakula* of Nārāyaṇa and the name Viṣṇugopa assumed by a Pallava ruler. The introduction of Bhāgavatism in the Far South is also indicated by the name of the Pāṇḍya capital Madurā, adopted from that of Mathurā and by the confused stories about the relationship of the Pāṇḍyas with the Pāṇḍavas (*supra*, p. 186).

The bas-reliefs at Badami, belonging to the period of early Chālukya kings, some of whom are styled as *Paramabhāgavata*, depict Viṣṇu lying on a serpent with Lakshmī massaging his feet. The Varāha, Narasiṁha and Vāmana avatāras are also found in the

<sup>1</sup>Bulcke, C., *Rāmakathā*, p. 154; cf. also Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Singh, B.P., *Rāmabhakti men Rasika Sampradāya*, pp. 76. etc.

<sup>3</sup>Bulcke, *op. cit.*, p. 158 f.

<sup>4</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Samgraha*, p. 424.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 441.

sculptures of the rock-cut caves at Mamallapuram. The Daśavatāra and Kailāśanātha temples at Ellora, ascribed to the eighth century, contain representations of the avatāras and other deities of the Vaishṇava pantheon.

In the South Indian inscriptions of the Gupta Age references to the temples or dhvajas of the god Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva are frequently found. The early Pallava and Gaṅga rulers were devout Bhāgavatas. Some of the early Kadamba kings, who call themselves Paramabrahmaṇya, may have been Vaishṇavas. Several southern rulers possibly attempted to suppress Buddhism and Jainism and revive the Brāhmaṇical religion. Some Pallava and Kadamba records attach much importance to the go-brahmāṇa exactly as we find it in the Vaishṇava inscriptions from Eran. The Tamil country became the greatest stronghold of the Bhāgavata religion giving birth to the Ālvārs and their celebrated songs in Tamil on bhakti and Kṛṣṇa worship. The Ālvārs also sang in praise of Nārāyaṇa, Rāma and Vāmana. They were also familiar with Kṛṣṇa's dalliances with the gopīs and one of them, a lady, regarded herself as a gopī and worshipped the God, her beloved, in that spirit. The Ālvārs revered the Vedic texts and knew the principal Purāṇas, and also avocated the recitation of God's name, meditation on his different forms, and his worship in the temples. The *Bhāgavata P.* speaks of the existence of large numbers of the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa in the Draviḍa country in the Kali age.<sup>1</sup>

After the Ālvārs another class of saints known as the Āchāryas arose. The earliest of them was Nāthamuni. He founded the famous Śrī Vaishṇava sect. He was followed in turn by Puṇḍrikāksha, Rāmamiśra, Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja (*supra*, p. 65). After Rāmānuja, who died about 1137 A.D., the Śrī Vaishṇavas were divided into two sects—Vaḍakalai or the school of northern learning which believed that moksha is easily available through Sanskrit scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads and the *Gītā* than through the Prabandhas called the Tamil Veda, and the Teṅkalai or the school of southern learning which held the opposite view.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CA, p. 428.

<sup>2</sup>*The Struggle for Empire*, p. 438. Vide, Rangacharya, V., 'Historical Evolution of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in South India', *CHI*, IV, pp. 163-85; Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 112. ff.



### *Vaikhānasa and Kāśmīrāgama Schools*

Various lists of the schools of Vaishṇavism are given in the Vaishṇava texts. The *Vishṇu Saṁhitā* enumerates as many as five schools—the Vaikhānasa, Sātvata, Śikhi, Ekāntika and Mūla (Pāñcharātra). In the list of *Bhṛgu Saṁhitā* Sātvata is replaced by Bhāgavata. As Śikhi and Ekāntika are only different modes of worship, they may easily be omitted. Thus there are only three main schools of Vaishṇavism—Vaikhānasa, Sātvata or Bhāgavata and Pāñcharātra. Sometimes the Pāñcharātra or one of its branches is called Kāśmīrāgama.

The Vaikhānasas are a small but important sect of the Vaishṇavas of South India which was founded by the sage Vikhanas who, according to legends, came down to the earth to organise the worship of the Lord in his *archā* (idol) form.<sup>1</sup> The Vaikhānasas have their own Śrauta-, Gṛhya- and Dharmasūtras. Baudhāyana mentions the *Vaikhānasaśāstra* which he describes as a guide to the Vānaprasthas. Haradatta in his gloss on Gautama (III. 2) calls Vānaprastha a Vaikhānasa because 'he lives according to the rule promulgated by Vikhanas'. In Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* Dushyanta asks whether Śakuntalā was enjoined to observe *Vaikhānasa-vrata*.<sup>2</sup>

Vikhanas, the sūtra author, founded the Vaikhānasa Āgamika school also. It was later elaborated by Bhṛgu, Marīchi, Atri and Kaśyapa. For the Vaikhānasas Vishṇu is the Supreme Being; Śrī or Lakshmī is His *vibhūti* or *aśvarya*. She is *nityānanda mūla prakṛti śakti* (ever blissful grand potential) and assumes different forms to suit his different *līlās*.<sup>3</sup> She is ever associated with Vishṇu in His five-fold states—*para*, *vyūha*, *vibhava*, *antaryāmin* and *archā*. The conception of these forms is found in the Pāñcharātra school as well, but the Vaikhānasas place greater emphasis on the *archā* worship. They would not agree with those hymns of the first three Ālvārs which say: Why visit different shrines when the Lord dwells within the heart. For the Vaikhānasas the worship of *archā* is the primary duty; other modes of worship are secondary. Also, they do not worship the Ālvārs, Āchāryas and the *maṭhādhipatis*, do not brand their bodies with *śaṅkha*, *chakra*, etc. and do not recite

<sup>1</sup>Venkataraman, K.R., 'The Vaikhānasas', *CHI*, IV, pp. 160-2.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*



Tamil *Prabandham* during worship. Though they are mentioned in the north also, they are quite frequently referred to in the Chola inscriptions.

In the Kaśmīrāgama-Pāñcharātra sect the object of devotion is called Vaikuṇṭha. In the Vedic tradition Vaikuṇṭha is the name of Indra while in the epic-Paurāṇika tradition Lord Viṣṇu is called Vaikuṇṭha because (a) he took birth from Vikuṇṭhā, the wife of Śubhra (*Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*) or (b) because he eliminates sins (*Bhāgavata*). He is conceived as a four-headed god wearing *śaṅkha*, *chakra*, *gadā* and *padma*. He created his Vaikuṇṭhaloka at the request of His beloved Rāmā.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Pathak, V.S., 'Vaikuṇṭha kā Vikāsa', *Gorakhpur Viśvavidyālaya Śodhapatrikā*, 1969-70, pp. 4-10. See also Gonda, *AEV*, p. 234 ff.

## Origin and Development of Śaivism

### *Prototype of Śiva in the Indus Religion*

The worship of Śiva is rooted in the pre-Vedic period. The central figure around which Śaivism started its career was purely mythical.<sup>1</sup> As we have discussed in detail in the first volume of the present work,<sup>2</sup> the character of Rudra-Śiva was formed by the assimilation of the traits of the various deities—Aryan as well as non-Aryan.<sup>3</sup> It is now almost certain that the authors of the Indus Valley Civilization worshipped a god who was conceived in human form and was regarded as Paśupati, Yogirāja, Trimukha (or Chaturmukha), Ūrdhvamedhu (ethyphallic) and probably Naṭarāja also. The Indus people also worshipped Mother Goddess (probably regarded both as the wife and sister of 'Paśupati'),<sup>4</sup> phallus (*liṅga*), chakras (*yonī*), nāgas, bull, etc. All these elements are found connected with Śaivism of the historical period and collectively tend to prove

<sup>1</sup>The earliest historical figure in Śaivism is Lakuliṣa. But he flourished probably in the second century B.C. (cf. Ch. 10).

<sup>2</sup>RHAI, I, Ch. 2, pp. 19-21.

<sup>3</sup>Some of the traits of Rudra-Śiva have interesting affinities with the features of a non-Indian god also. As we have shown in our *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen* (p. 199 f.) and in an article ('Paśchimi Eśia men Śivopāsanā', *Bāsantī*, Varanasi, 1961, pp. 63-7), in Anatolia, in the early centuries of the second millenium B.C. was worshipped by the Hittites or some other tribes a god whose *vāhana* and symbol was bull, and whose weapon was *paraśu* or trident or club. He was also associated with a *siṃhavāhinī* goddess and was depicted as surrounded by animals (Paśupati). In the Yazilikaya gallery he is shown in mountaineous surroundings, alongwith a *siṃhavāhinī* goddess (*ibid.*, figures 50, 51 and 55 of our *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*).

<sup>4</sup>Vide our RHAI, I, pp. 24-9; *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, 1963, p. 551; 'Yajurveda men Rudra kī Svarūpa aur usakā Aitiḥāsika Mahatva', *Bhārati*, Bombay, 1963, p. 130 ff.; 'A Socio-Religious Aspect of the Indus Civilization', *Cultural Contours of India*, Part II, Jaipur, 1981, pp. 35-8.

that Marshall was right when he suggested that the worship of a prototype of Śiva was prevalent in the Indus religion.<sup>1</sup>

### *Rudra in the Vedic Samhitās*

The next important contribution to the personality of Rudra-Śiva was made by the Ṛgvedic Rudra who was of terrific nature but was amenable to be transformed into a pacific deity.<sup>2</sup> Ṛgvedic Rudra is a comparatively unimportant god with only two and a half complete hymns to him and about 75 casual references in all. But in essence he is not different from the major gods.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, nothing is said in this text about his association with Mother Goddess, Nandi, Trīśūla and Yoga and about his liṅga form. The *SV* gives him no new features but in the *YV* we have a clearer though somewhat different picture of his personality. Though it would be too much to say that Rudra in the *YV* represents the monotheistic stage of the Vedic religion,<sup>4</sup> yet it is true that now for the first time he is addressed as a creator god and is described as the overlord of the vegetation, animal world and all the spheres of human life. Further, for the first time he is associated with a goddess named Ambikā (who is described as his sister) and also with mountains (by his epithets Girīśa, Giritra, Girichara etc.). In the *RV* Rudra was generally associated with rivers, earth, water, trees and mountains; now he has a particular habitat in the Mūjavat Hill. For his special attendant Rudra has a mouse (which, in the Paurāṇika mythology, was transferred to Gaṇeśa). Further, now he is described as the lord of the thieves, robbers, cheats, bald-headed, night-rovers and deformed, as also of the architects, councillors and merchants.

<sup>1</sup>The alternative interpretations suggested by some of the critics of Marshall (such as K.A.N. Sastri, *CHI*, II, pp. 65-7) are far less acceptable. Vide Dandekar, *Rudra in the Veda*, Poona, p. 42 ff.; Goyal, *RHAI*, I, p. 20 ff.; J.N. Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 64. The denunciation of the *Śiśnadevāḥ* in the *RV* also supports Marshall's interpretation. Also see Hazra, R.C., 'An Overlooked Aspect of Ṛgvedic Rudra', *JAIH*, V, 1971-72, pp. 123-48.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>For a detailed study see *RHAI*, I, pp. 25, 64.

<sup>4</sup>This is the view of V.S. Bhandari. Vide his 'Rudra as the Supreme God in the *Yajurveda*', *Nagpur University Journal*, XVI, No. 1, 1965, pp. 37-42.

In the *AV* what is added about Rudra is not new, but only an extension or intensification of his already known traits. In this text he is Śarva, Paśupati, Rudra, Ugra, Bhava and Mahādeva. Together with Soma he is invoked for remission of sins. Bhava and Śarva are together invoked for the expiation of sins and together with Yama and Mṛtyu, Rudra is invoked for the same purpose. He has a golden bow and a number of arrows. His animal associates have become more numerous and varied. Now they include cows, horses, goats, sheep, crows dogs, deer, ducks, snakes, vultures, birds, pythons, eagles, and aquatic animals. Two whole hymns are addressed to him as the lord of animals (Paśupati).

In the *AV* Mahādeva (a name of Rudra) is identified with Ekavṛātya whose association with yoga is clearly indicated.<sup>1</sup> Further, in this text Rudra's association with the phallus worship is also quite obvious.<sup>2</sup>

### *Rudra in the Brāhmaṇas*

The terrific nature of Rudra gained still greater prominence in the age of the Brāhmaṇas. In the *AB* he is spoken of as being the embodiment of all dreaded forms, and as having been created conjointly by all the gods to punish Prajāpati, the creator of the universe, who committed the sin of feeling love towards his own daughter. The *AB* also indicates that men of that age felt that if the deity was even addressed by the name 'Rudra', he would do something very terrible to the people. The *Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇa* seeks to explain how the eight names (Rudra, Śarva, Ugra, Aśani, Mahādeva, Īśāna, Bhava and Paśupati) came to be applied to Rudra. The first four of these are descriptive of his terrific aspect and the latter four of the pacific one. The earliest use of the name Śiva is found only in the *Śvetāśvatara Upa*. Keith believes that the two names Mahādeva and Īśāna are of special importance and that a sectarian worship is indicated by them. In the *ŚB* also Rudra is conceived of as a really frightful deity. In *ŚB* II. 6.26 his hankering after the sacrificer's cattle is alluded to and the sacrificer is

<sup>1</sup>See *RHAI*, I, p. 98 f. for details.

<sup>2</sup>Vide, *ibid.*, p. 99 f. for details.



urged to send him away by giving him provisions. The immediately following verses also clearly indicate that in the age of the *ŚB* Rudra was regarded as an evil deity who rendered even his worshippers impure. Even the *Śatarudrīya* hymn is regarded by the compilers of the *ŚB* as having been composed with the object of appeasing the wrath of the terrible Rudra.

The Vedic texts also speak of the plurality of the Rudras. Their number was fixed at eleven in the *Mbh.* and *Purāṇas*, just as the number of the *Ādityas* was fixed at twelve and of the *Vasus* at eight. In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa describes himself as Śaṅkara among the Rudras (*Rudrāṇāṃ Śaṅkaraśchāsmi*).

### *Rudra-Śiva in the Upanishads*

The rise of a devotional Śaiva sect is slightly hinted at in the *Śatarudrīya* of the *YV*, for the practice of the recitation of a hundred names of the god (some of which allude to his terrific and others to his auspicious form—*śiva tanu*) presumes an attitude of theistic devotion. In the Upanishadic age his supremacy is given a philosophical basis, for in the *Śvetāśvatara*, which for the first time uses Śiva as his proper name, he figures as the Great God, not only superior to other Vedic gods (*Maheśvara* among all the *īśvaras*) but also as identical with Brahman, who has no second. In many ways he reminds the *Virāṭapurusha* of the *Purushasūkta* of the *RV*. “For truly, Rudra (the terrible) is the one—they (who know the one) stand not for a second—who rules all the world with his ruling powers.”<sup>1</sup> “He, the protector, after creating all beings, merges them together at the end of time. Having an eye on every side and a face on every side, having an arm on every side and a foot on every side, the one god faces together with hands, with wings, creating the heaven and the earth—He who is the source and origin of the gods the ruler of all, Rudra, the great seer, who of old created the Golden Germ (*Hiranyagarbha*)—may He endow us with clear intellect.”<sup>2</sup>

According to Bhandarkar the religio-philosophic speculations contained in the *Śvetāśvatara* though essentially Upanishadic, are

<sup>1</sup>*Śvetāśvatara Upa.*, III. 2.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, III. 3-4.

much nearer to the later Bhakti school than the ideas of any other older Upanishadic text. It stands at the door of the Bhakti school and pours its loving adoration on Rudra-Śiva instead of on Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, as the *Gītā* did a few centuries later. As we have seen, Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was a historical figure while in the age in which the *Śvetāśvatara* was composed Rudra-Śiva, a purely mythological concept, was alone in the field as the Supreme God. The germs of Bhakti which manifested themselves at the time, were therefore directed towards him. The *Śvetāśvatara Upa.* thus contains the theism of the Upanishadic period in its most mature form with a distinctly personal god at the centre. The attitude of its author is of one-souled devotion (*ekātmikā bhakti*) and absolute surrender (*śaraṇamaham prapadye*) to Rudra. However, as Bhandarker argues, it should be remembered that though in this work the Supreme Soul has been identified with Rudra, Śiva, Īśāna and Maheśvara, and his powers are spoken of as Īśānīs, yet there is no indication whatever that these names have been given for the purpose of raising Rudra-Śiva to the status of supreme godhead to the exclusion of other gods. Names indicative of Rudra-Śiva appear to have been used, since he was invested with a personality perceived and acknowledged by all. This Upanishad, therefore, is not a sectarian treatise like others promulgated in later times, and that is the reason why it is often quoted by Śaṅkarāchārya, Rāmānuja and other writers of different schools, and not by the Śaivas only.

The emergence of Rudra-Śiva as a sectarian god becomes clearer in the *Atharvaśiras Upa.* of a much later date. In this work Rudra is not only identified with many other deities but is also described as transcending each of them individually and collectively. Reference is also made to his devotees listening to the prescribed texts (*śravaṇa*), thinking on their real meaning (*manana*) and undertaking to perform the Pāśupatavrata involving ceremonial touching of the different limbs of the body with ashes. The performance of this vrata is said to result in loosening the bonds (*pāśa*) of the individual (*paśu*) leading to his liberation (*paśupāśamivochana*). Undoubtedly it was the original source on which one of the *vidhis* of the later Pāśupatas was based.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 70.

*Rudra in the Sūtra Literature*

Meanwhile the darker side of the nature of Rudra, which became somewhat obscure in the devotionism of the Upanishads, was not forgotten. A sacrifice called Śūlagava is mentioned in most of the Gṛhyasūtras in which a bull is sacrificed to Rudra to appease him. It is prescribed that the rite should be performed beyond the limits of a village and its remains should not be brought into it. It suggests the inauspicious character of this rite. The inauspicious nature of Rudra is also indicated by the directions given in some of the Gṛhyasūtras to render obeisance to Rudra and pray for safe conduct when traversing a path, coming to a place where four roads meet, crossing a river, getting into ferry-boat, entering a forest, ascending a mountain, passing by a cemetery or by a cow-shed and such other places.<sup>1</sup>

*Rudra-Śiva in the Rāmāyaṇa*

The Vedic Rudra underwent a more thorough change in the Epics. The *Rāmā.*<sup>2</sup>, being primarily a Vaiṣṇava work and far smaller in comparison to the *Mbh.*, makes fewer references to Rudra-Śiva and whatever references are made by it they are not much different from those of the *Mbh.* discussed below in detail. However, a few points may be noted. In the *Rāmā.* the transformation of Rudra into Śiva is more complete. He is now Śitikanṭha, Traymbaka, Paśupati, Śiva, Śaṅkara and Āśutosha. His terrific aspect finds mention only rarely. His philosophical aspect is also not described much but its knowledge is indicated by some of his epithets (e.g. *akshara*, *avyaya*). His association with yoga, asceticism and bhakti is more explicit. His wife Umā finds respectful mention. The stories of his Vishapāna (poison-drinking) at the time of Sāgaramanthana, Gaṅgāvataṛaṇa, his marriage with Pārvatī, Madanadahana, the birth of Skanda, the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice, Tripuradahana, Andhakabadha, etc. found in greater detail in the *Mbh.* are also described or alluded to in the *Rāmā.* Mention is also made of his

<sup>1</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup>For detailed discussion and references vide Yaduvamśī, *Śaiva Māta*, Patna, 1955, pp. 56-66.



gaṇas and Nandin and of his worship by the dānavas such as Rāvaṇa and Vidyutkeśa.

### *Rudra-Śiva in the Mahābhārata*

The various aspects of the epic-Paurāṇika Rudra-Śiva find concrete formulation in the *Mbh.*<sup>1</sup> Let us discuss his philosophical aspect first. When Arjuna praises Śiva for pāśupatāstra, he describes him as a supreme god with the attributes of creator, preserver and destroyer, with a third eye in the forehead, invincible, the destroyer of Dakṣa's sacrifice, etc. He is so very powerful that Nārāyaṇa could see him only after he had practised penance for thousands of years and when he finally saw him, he sang a hymn to him addressing him as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, the Alpha and the Omega, the Subtle Abstract Principle, prototype of all creation, past, present and future, the Omnipresent and Omniscient Being. When Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa who the shining figure was who went before him killing enemies even before Arjuna's own weapons touched them, Kṛṣṇa tells him that it was none other than Śaṅkara also known as Tryambaka (for being the lord of three goddesses), Śiva (because he offers sacrifices desiring good of mankind in all spheres), Vyomakeśa (because his hair is nothing but the brilliant splendour of the sun and the moon), Vṛṣhākapi (because Dharma is called the Vṛsha), Hara (because he robs Brahmā, Indra, Varuṇa and Kubera), and Rudra (because he is composed of all that consumes, all that is sharp, fierce and powerful in flesh, blood and marrow). The epithets Śūlin, Jaṭila, Sahasrākṣa, Nīlakaṇṭha, Pinākin, Ambikāpati etc. are also used for him. He is also characterised as fond of dance-offerings (*Nāṭyopahāralubdha*) and the patron of music and singing (*Gītavādītrapālin*), with ten hands (*Daśabāhu*), with head in his hands (*Kapālahasta*), fond of ashes of the burning pyre (*Chitibhasmapriya*), sword-tongued (*Khaḍgajihvā*), with a deformed face (*Vikratavaktra*), with an antelope skin for his upper garment (*Kṛṣṇājīnotariya*), with a stout but decayed body and with matted hair

<sup>1</sup>For detailed discussion and references see Yaduvamśi, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-89; Bhattacharji, S., *op. cit.*, pp. 92-118; Ayyar, C.V. Narayana, *Origin and Early History of Śaivism in South India*, Ch. V.

(*Sthūlajīrṇajāṭila*), with locks shining like a blazing sun and fire (*Dīptasūryāgnijaṭila*), concealed in the guise of a lunatic (*Unmattave-shaprachchhana*), the preserver of all creatures (*Sarvalokaprajāpati*), bull-shaped (*Vṛṣharūpa*) and large-jawed (*mahāhanu*). In answer to Pārvatī's question he explains the functions of his four faces thus: with the eastern one he performs Indra's task, with the northern he enjoys Umā's company, with the southern, malignant face he destroys all creation while his western face is auspicious to all creatures.<sup>1</sup>

One of Śiva's functions in the Epic is to give boons to the supplicants. He gave his Pāśupata weapon to Arjuna and granted the desire of the Kāśī princess to be born as king Drupada's son for killing Bhīṣma to avenge herself. The Śakti weapon, which Yudhishtira hurled at Śalya, was supposed to have been fashioned by Tvastṛ on his behalf. Paraśurāma gained his famous weapon by pleasing the god at mountain Gandhamādana. Kṛṣṇa Dvāpāyana pleased Śiva with penance and received Śuka as son.

Of Śiva's exploits the most frequently mentioned are his burning of the three cities (Tripuradahana) and his destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice. Of Tripuradahana<sup>2</sup> there are actually three full accounts with some variations and many stray references strewn in the whole of the Epic. Of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice also we have three distinct accounts. In the longest account when Pārvatī sees the procession of gods moving towards Dakṣa's sacrifice, Śiva explains to her that gods had fore-ordained that he should have no share in the sacrifice. Then, observing her mortification, he rushes towards the sacrifice and utterly destroys it. In another version he creates Vīrabhadra and Bhadrakālī who at his bidding completely smash the sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

Śiva is also credited with the killing of the demon Andhaka. Among his more peaceful enterprises may be mentioned his holding of the river Gaṅgā as it descended from the sky at the request of Bhagīratha.

The Vedic Rudra was not an ascetic himself but the epic Śiva

<sup>1</sup>Agrawala, V.S., 'The Meaning of Mahādeva', *Purāṇa*, VII, No. 2, 1965, pp. 291-99.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Ayyar, *op. cit.*, Ch. IV.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

is. He is quite frequently mentioned as engaged in deep meditation.

Śiva is not only worshipped in his proper person, he is worshipped as a phallic deity also. He is called Sathāṇu because his liṅga is fixed in erect position. It is said that Śiva is unique in that it is only his liṅga that is worshipped by the gods.

In the Epics Śiva is almost everywhere accompanied by Pārvatī while Skanda and Gaṇeśa supplant the Marutas as his sons. In the Epics Pārvatī is also an independent goddess in her own right. In some passages her union with Śiva is conceptually carried to the extreme where the couple is described as one figure (Ardhanārīśvara).

Śiva's associates in the Epics are still essentially the same as they were in the *YV* and *AV*. They have only gained in detail and have become increasingly repugnant. One of the new Epic associations of Śiva is that with snakes. It was probably conceived in the Indus Civilization, but becomes explicit now.

The Vedas give a mouse to Śiva as his individual animal associate; in the Epic bull is his *vāhana*. The bull is his close associate as well.

#### *Rudra-Śiva in the Purāṇas*

In the Purāṇas<sup>1</sup> (specially the *Saura*, *Matsya*, *Liṅga*, and *Vāyu*) the various aspects of the post-Vedic Rudra-Śiva concept, which we notice in the two Epics become more explicit and the Epic stories connected with him are related in even greater details. It is here neither necessary and nor desirable to repeat them; we shall therefore recapitulate them only briefly.

In his philosophical aspect Śiva of the Purāṇas is Para Brahma or Parama Purusha. He is the Ultimate Transcendental and Immanent Reality. As the same claim was made by the Vaishṇavas for Viṣṇu, the liberal thinkers of the age propounded the identification of the two. Not only this, in several Purāṇas all the three deities of the Hindu Triad were conceived as the aspects of the same Reality. Alongwith him the philosophical aspect of his wife or Śakti was also developed (cf. Ch. 11).

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed study vide Yaduvāṁśī, *Śaiva Mata*, Ch. 5.



The popular aspect of Śiva in the Purāṇas is also similar to that of the Epics. He is Śiva, Śaṅkara, the husband of Umā-Pārvatī, and father of Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. He may easily be pleased with yoga, tapas and bhakti. He is himself a Mahāyogin. He is worshipped in the form of images as well as liṅgas. A large portion of the Śaiva Purāṇas is found devoted to the stories connected with liṅga worship (*infra*). His ardhanārīśvara form is also described in the Purāṇas. Several vratas, upavāsas and festivals have become associated with his worship including Anaṅga Trayodaśī and Śiva-Chaturdaśī.

The fierce or ugra form of Śiva is not wholly forgotten in the Purāṇas. Some of the Purāṇas anticipate his worship in the Tāntrika form also.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Lines of Development of Rudra into Rudra-Śiva*

As we observed in the first volume of the present work, the transformation of the Ṛgvedic Rudra into the Rudra-Śiva concept was not the gradual development of a Vedic deity along the lines laid down in the *RV*, but the metamorphosis of a minor Aryan god into a composite god which has Aryan, pre-Aryan as well as non-Aryan tribal features.<sup>2</sup> With the passage of time he not only grew in stature till from a minor deity he was proclaimed the Supreme Being, but also changed his character fundamentally. The story of his transformation in the Vedic age itself as the result of the influence of the Indus religion, some tribal and mountainous deities and his association with the non-Vedic Vṛātyas and the city-dwelling people, has already been discussed by us.<sup>3</sup> Here some additional points may be noted. The fact that his wife Pārvatī is called the daughter of Himālaya added strength to his association with mountains. There may have been a deified hunter also at the back of his concept. The *ŚB* records that when other gods attained heaven Rudra was left behind. This, alongwith the episode of the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice, may also be interpreted as a record of the Aryan reluctance to include Śiva among their gods. The *ŚB* also tells us that Śarva was a name of Agni among the eastern

<sup>1</sup>Bannerjee, P., 'Some Aspects of Early History of Śaivism,' *Indo-Asian Culture*, XIV, No. 3, 1965, pp. 216-31. Vide *infra*, Ch. on Tāntrikism.

<sup>2</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20 ff.

people and that the name Bhava was used among the Bāhlikas. It suggests that several components of the epic-Paurāṇika concept of Rudra-Śiva were lent him by different tribal gods of different regions.

*Evidence for the Popularity and Early Spread of Śaivism*

The evidence for the popularity and spread of Śaivism in early period is quite meagre. Pāṇini in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* refers to several names of Rudra—Bhava, Śarva, Rudra and Mṛda. The last one is included as one of the names of Rudra in the Śatarudrīya also. The name Śiva also occurs in another Pāṇini sūtra (IV. 1. 112) *Śivādibhyon* which means that the words like 'Śaiva' derived by the application of suffix *an* on words like 'Śiva' denote the descendants of them (of Śiva etc.). J.N. Banerjea suggests that here 'descendants' should be taken in the sense of 'followers'.<sup>1</sup> Early Buddhist works like *Chullavagga* and the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, however, mention Śiva as Deva or Devaputra but do not refer to his worshippers explicitly. The famous *Niddesa* passage, quoted elsewhere in connection with Bhakti and Vaishṇavism, refers to Deva and his worshippers but the reference is obviously too dubious to be of some significance. The historians of Alexander's invasion mention a people called the Siboi or Sibae who lived in the Punjab. They are usually identified with the Śibis of the Indian literature. According to Banerjea their name as well as the fact that they wore dress of skin and carried clubs appear to equate them with the worshippers of Śiva. Hesychius, a Classical writer, informs that 'bull was the god of India'. He has obviously referred to the bull form of Śiva.<sup>2</sup>

Megasthenes refers to two Indian gods, Heracles and Dionysos. His Dionysos is usually identified with Śiva, for he describes him as the god of hills and mountains. But Megasthenes clearly says that the Indians spoke of three individuals by this name appearing in different ages—Indos (apparently Indra), Katapogon (Kapardin?) and Lenaios (Liṅgin? Lāṅglin? Saṅkarshaṇa who was a *haladhara*?). If our suggestion is correct than only Katapogon would be identifiable with Śiva, the Kapardin or Jaṭila.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>S. Jaiswal (*op. cit.*, p. 55) identifies Katapogon with Saṅkarshaṇa and Lenaios with Śiva.

In the post-Maurya period Jālauka, a successor of Aśoka, was a Śaiva. According to the *Shaddarśanasamuchchaya* of Haribhadra Gautama and Kaṇāda, founders respectively of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems were Śaivas. Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* mentions not only Śiva-Bhāgavatas (discussed in the next Chapter) but also refers to Rudra twice as a god who has to be propitiated with animal sacrifice and on two other occasions describes the medicinal herbs of Rudra as auspicious (*śiva*). He also refers to the god by his proper name Śiva twice, once in connection with his images.

The inscriptional data for early Śaivism are very few. But early Indian coins of all varieties—the punchmarked, cast and die struck—represent Śiva in all the three forms—phallic, theriomorphic (as a bull) and anthropomorphic. The three-faced Śiva on early Ujjain coins is shown carrying daṇḍa and kamaṇḍalu. Two-armed Śiva is shown with a trisūla on a seal of Śivarakṣita, on some coins of Maues and Gondophornes, on a few issues of the Audumbara chief Dharaghosha and on the coins of Wema Kadphises, Kanishka, Huvishka and Vāsudeva. There is probably a reference to a Śaiva shrine (Śivathale=Śivasthale) in a Kharoṣṭhī record of the first cent. A.D.<sup>1</sup> The patron deity of the city of Pushkalāvati was also probably Śiva. The Indo-Parthian ruler Gondophornes was probably a Śaiva. Wema Kadphises, the Kushāṇa ruler, was certainly a devotee of Śiva. He has been explicitly described as a Māheśvara on his copper coins.

### *Liṅgopāsanā : its Popularity*

It is a well-known fact that from a fairly early period the Śaivas in general used to place Śivaliṅga, the emblem of Śiva, as the principal object of their worship in the main garbhagṛha of their shrines. The various types of anthropomorphic figures of the god were carved in different parts of the temple more or less as subsidiary figures.

The most important liṅga mentioned in the epic-Paurāṇika literature are : Kedāreśvara liṅga on the Himālaya, the Vaidyanātha at Deogarh, the Viśveśvara liṅga in Vārāṇasī, the

<sup>1</sup>Banerjia, *op. cit.*, p. 76 f.

Mahākāla liṅga and the Amareśvara liṅgas in and near Ujjain, the Omkāreśvara liṅga on the Narmadā, the Śomeśvara liṅga at Somanatha, the Tryambaka liṅga near Nasik, the Bhimaśaṅkara liṅga near the source of the Bhīmā in Maharashtra, the Mahābaleśvara liṅga at Gokarṇa in Kanara, the Mallikārjuna liṅga at Śrī-śaila and the Rāma liṅga at Rāmeśvaram. The location of Gautameśa liṅga and Nāgeśa (Dārūkavana) is not known.

#### *Antiquity of Liṅgopāsanā*

The antiquity of phallicism in India is now well established. As we have seen, phallicism was prevalent in the Indus Civilization<sup>1</sup> though it is difficult to postulate that the Indus people worshipped the liṅgas and yonīs jointly, as is done today. J.N. Banerjea rightly points out that the 'liṅga on arghya (or yonī)' emblem was quite late in appearance even in the historical period.<sup>2</sup> When the Vedic Aryans settled in North India they faced several hostile tribes. Among them were included the Śiśnadevāḥ (the worshippers of phallus). As we have shown elsewhere<sup>3</sup> in the Middle Vedic Age there were various other religious and social groups which subscribed to the cult of phallus as a result of which it was increasingly accepted by the Vedic Aryans. The Epics and Purāṇas are full of the stories of the high antiquity of the various Śivaliṅgas worshipped in India. For example the *Skanda P.* records that the Avimukteśvara liṅga was founded at Vārāṇasī during the reign of Divodāsa, a king of the Vedic Age. Similarly the Dakṣeśvara Śivaliṅga is said to have been founded by Dakṣa Prajāpati, Naleśvara by king Nala, Rāmeśvara by Rāma of Ayodhyā, and so on. All these late legends can hardly prove the prevalence of liṅga worship among the Vedic Aryans as Ravindra Kumar Siddhanta-shastri seems to think.<sup>4</sup> However it may be admitted that their testimony supports the conclusion that the Aryans began to accept liṅga worship within their fold in the post-Vedic period.

The evidence of the Upanishads clarifies the point. The *Śvetāśvatara Upa.* (IV. 11) speaks of the god Īśāna (Rudra) as

<sup>1</sup>RHAI, I, Ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup>DHI, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>RHAI, I, p. 97 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Siddhantashastri, R.K., *Śaivism Through the Ages*, Ch. 3.



presiding over every yonī. In V. 2 of the same work the Lord is said to preside over all forms and yonīs. According to R. G. Bhandarkar it may be an allusion to the physical fact of liṅga and yonī being connected together. The mention of the term liṅga in the *Bṛhaddevatā* of Śaunaka and the description of a thumb-like form of Rudra in the *Śvetāśvatara* (III. 13; V.8)<sup>1</sup> may also be held as indicative of the gradual acceptance of liṅga as the emblem of Rudra-Śiva.

But for a long time the Aryan were hesitant to accept liṅga worship fully. Patañjali (2nd cent. B.C.) refers only to the *pratikṛtis* of Śiva, and not to his liṅga emblem. The coins of Wema Kadphises (1st cent. A.D.) depict Śiva in human form with his trident and mount Nandin, but does not show the liṅga emblem. However gradually the popularity of liṅga worship increased as is evident from the following facts:<sup>2</sup>

(1) Several coins of different varieties from Taxila and Ujjain dating back to the pre-Christian centuries (3rd-2nd cent. B.C.) contain phallic emblem. The Ujjain coins show Śiva in human form with bull on one side and liṅga with Sthalavṛksha on the other.

(2) An interesting 5' high sculpture of Śivaliṅga of probably 2nd or first cent. B.C. was discovered by Gopinatha Rao from Gudimallam in North Arcot Dist. It is a beautifully but realistically carved Śivaliṅga with a well-proportioned two-armed Śiva in human form on the surface. The sex mark of the god is prominently shown. The god stands on a dwarf (the *Apasmārapurusha* of later texts). The practice of showing human Śiva on a liṅga in a single sculpture is found in later periods also.

(3) Many other realistic phalli of 1st to 3rd cent. A.D. from Mathurā and other places are reported by J. N. Banerjea.

(4) The worship of liṅga is mentioned in the later portions of the *Mbh.* For example, in the *Anuśāsanaparvan* Kṛṣṇa is told by the sage Upamanyu that Mahādeva is the only god whose liṅga is worshipped by men. In the *Vanaparvan* Arjuna prepares a *sthaṇḍila* of Mahādeva, which probably means dais with a Śivaliṅga.

<sup>1</sup>Tāntrika texts also refer to the aṅgushṭha form liṅgas.

<sup>2</sup>For details vide *DHI*, p. 455 ff.

(5) The Classical Sanskrit literature is aware of liṅga worship. It is mentioned by Daṇḍin in his *Daśakumāracharita* and by Bāṇa in his *Harshacharita*.

*Epic-Paurāṇika Stories Regarding the Origin of Liṅgopāsanā*

The *Mbh.* gives some interesting details regarding the Liṅga cult. In the Droṇaparvan it is said that 'Sthāṇu is so called because his liṅga is always standing (erect)'. Further, the expressions Ūrdhvaliṅga, Ūrdhvaretas and Sthiraliṅga occur in the different portions of the Epic for Śiva. The Anuśāsanaparvan generally depicts the importance of the worship of the liṅga. The *HV* also emphatically identifies liṅga and bhaga with Tryambaka (Śiva) and Umā, and, states that there is no third entity apart from these in the world.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Mbh.* Kṛṣṇa relates to Yudhisṭhira the following story about the origin of liṅga worship: once Brahmā told Śaṅkara not to create. Whereupon Śaṅkara concealed himself under water. When there was no creation for a long period, Brahmā created another Prajāpati who brought into existence a large number of beings. After some time Mahādeva came out of water, and seeing that new beings had been created and were in a flourishing condition, he cut off his organ of generation as no more necessary, and it stuck into the ground. He then went away to perform penances at the foot of the Mūjavant Mountain.

The *Skanda P.* narrates that when Śiva went for begging alms in a naked fashion to Dāruvana, the wives of ṛshis fell in love with him. Thereupon the ṛshis cursed him that his liṅga would fall down. The *Saura P.* corroborates this account. The *Liṅga P.* states that Śiva wanted to know and examine the philosophical knowledge attained by the ṛshis residing at Dāruvana, and it was afterwards that the above mentioned events happened. According to the *Padma P.* once Sāvitrī cursed Śiva saying that the ṛshis would curse him and eventually his liṅga would fall down. But later on, when appeased, she said that the liṅga thus fallen shall be worshipped by the whole mankind. The *Vāmana P.* relates that Śiva being grieved at the loss of Satī began to wander into a deep forest, named Dāruvana. There the wives of the sages became

<sup>1</sup>Karmarkar, A.P., 'The Liṅga Cult in Ancient India', *B.C. Law Volume*, I, p. 463.

agitated with the pain of love for him and began to follow him. When the sages saw their holy dwellings thus deserted, they exclaimed, "May the liṅga of this man fall to the ground." That instant the liṅga of Śiva fell to the ground and the god disappeared. The liṅga, as it fell, penetrated through the lower worlds, and increased in height, untill its top towered above the heavens. On hearing of this Viṣṇu descended into the lower regions in order to ascertain its base and Brahmā ascended the heavens for discovering its top. But both were unsuccessful. Then together they approached and praised the liṅga and entreated Śiva to resume it which he did after getting the promise that gods and men will pay homage to it. According to the *Śiva P.* out of compassion Śiva appeared before the two fighting gods in the form of a huge column of blazing fire. This huge column of fire was known as Śivaliṅga. In the *Liṅga P.* this column is called Bhāskaraliṅga.

#### *Types of Liṅgas*

The liṅgas are variously divided into natural and man-made categories or *chala* and *achala* categories or according to their place of worship (palaces, houses, temples, open spaces etc.). Each of these are further divided into five kinds—*svayambhū*, *daiva*, *pālaka*, *ārsha* and *mānasa*. *Svayambhū* liṅgas are of several kinds—*Bāṇaliṅgas*, *Siddhaliṅgas*, *Narmadāliṅgas*, etc. Tradition has it that fourteen crores of *Bāṇaliṅgas* are found in eight different parts of the world. Besides, it is said that the *Gaṇḍakī* supplies six varieties of liṅga stones which are called respectively *Śivanābha*, *Aghora*, *Sadyojāta*, *Vāmadeva*, *Tatpururusa*, and *Īśāna*, of which the *Aghora* alone is unfit for worship.

According to the *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa-Saṁvāda* different liṅgas should be worshipped inside and outside the houses. The *Brāhmaṇa* householders should use liṅgas made of rock-crystal, *Kṣatriyas* of silver, *Vaiśyas* of bell-metal, *Śūdras* of earth and *Rākshasas* of gold.

As noted above, early liṅgas were realistic in appearance. In the Gupta and post-Gupta period, realism gives place to conventionalized form. The *Karamadāṇḍā* liṅga of the time of Kumāragupta I (c. 455 A.D.) indicates this attempt towards conventionalization. However, on some *Bhita* seals of this age old realism is also found.

From the Late Kushāṇa and Gupta periods *mukhaliṅga* and *liṅgodbhava* images are also found. In the *mukhaliṅga* images one

(as is the No. 42 of Lucknow Museum) or four faces of Śiva are shown on the Rudra or Pūjābhāga of the liṅga (Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, and Tatpurusha); the fifth face *Īśāna* remains invisible. The four faces are carved on four sides of the shaft. On one mukhaliṅga of Mathurā, however, four shafts have one face each and are joined together. J.N. Banerjea reports a dvimukha Śivaliṅga from the same site.

The liṅgodbhava images depict the failure of Brahmā and Viṣṇu to find the top and bottom of the blazing fire of Śivaliṅga. One of the earliest liṅgodbhava images is found in the Daśāvatāra cave of Ellora. Such images are also found from Kāñchī, Ambaramangalam, etc.

### *Idea Underlying the Liṅgopāsanā*

According to J.N. Banerjea and Gopinath Rao the principal idea underlying the worship of Śivaliṅga was originally phallic. It is proved by the discovery of realistic stone liṅgas from the Indus sites, by the contempt shown to the Śiśnadevas by the R̥gvedic Aryans, by the Śivaliṅgas carved as realistic phalli found from Gudimallam and other places and by the late acceptance of the phallic worship in Hinduism.

However, with the process of the acceptance of lingopāsanā by the Aryans, its significance also changed. It is evident even from the changed form of the Śivaliṅgas. As noted above, in the Classical period instead of a realistic phallus it became highly conventionalized; so much so that Havell even suggested that the Śivaliṅga was modelled on the votive stūpas of the Buddhists.

According to some modern scholars Śivaliṅga and its pīṭha part (which is called yonī) are jointly the symbols of male and female principles. And it cannot be denied that the Tāntrika texts support this interpretation. But J.N. Banerjea believes that originally liṅgas and yonīs were worshipped separately. Firstly, in the Indus religion the ring stones and liṅga stones appear to have served the purpose of cult objects separately. Secondly, the Gudimallam and other early historical liṅgas are not found associated with yonīs. Thirdly, the so-called yonībhāga of the Śivaliṅga may be regarded as merely the *praṇālī* or drain for the easy flow of water poured on the liṅga.



Many scholars<sup>1</sup> do not believe that Śivaliṅga is the phallic emblem of Śiva. They explain it as a philosophical symbol. They point out that in the *Śvetāśvatara* the Lord is described as thumb-shaped. It might have been the source of the idea of the phallus like shape of Lord Śiva. The statement that he presides over every yonī merely means that he is the lord of all beings (yonīs or creatures). Hence his name 'paśu (=ātman, yonī) pati'. The legend of Śiva appearing before Brahmā and Viṣṇu in the form of a fiery column which could not be fathomed by Brahmā and Viṣṇu also proves that Śivaliṅga has nothing to do with the phallus worship.

As a symbol of fertility liṅgas are installed on the Śamādhis of saints. Some of the famous centres of the liṅga worship (Jyotirliṅgas) are said to have been divine cemeteries originally.

It is quite likely that the liṅga was originally the phallic emblem of the Supreme God but in the historical period it had undoubtedly become the symbol of a philosophical concept. Similarly, it is possible that the worship of yonī, the symbol of the Mother Goddess, was not originally associated with the liṅga worship, but in the later ages both of them were definitely regarded as the joint symbols of male and female principles.

<sup>1</sup>Siddhantasastri, R.K., *Śaivism Through the Ages*, p. 58.

## Chapter 10

# Sects of Saivism

### *The Main Śaiva Sects*

In the Western context the concept of a 'sect' embodies three essential features : a specific doctrine (including a prescribed mode of worship), a priesthood, and a well-defined and exclusive laity.<sup>1</sup> But the structure of the Hindu 'sects' in general is much more amorphous than that of the Christian ones. In most cases in Hinduism more emphasis is placed on doctrine (*darśana*, *mata*, *samava*) and mode of worship (*vidhi*) than on organisation. As regards Śaivism several Sanskrit commentators on *Brahmasūtra* II.2.3 criticise the doctrines and practices of religious sects which preach devotion to Śiva and philosophical dualism. Śaṅkarāchārya (788-820 A.D.) mentions only the Māheśvaras who obviously were the same as the Pāśupatas. Vāchaspati Miśra and Bhāskarāchārya, both belonging to the middle of the ninth century, divide the Māheśvaras into four groups—Śaivas, Pāśupatas, Kāpālikas, and Kāruṇikasiddhāntins (or Kāthakasiddhāntins or Kārukasisiddhāntins). Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja designate Kāruka-, Kāruṇika-, Kāthakasiddhāntins as Kālāmukhās. Several other names for these sects are also found in different sources <sup>2</sup>

### Śiva-Bhāgavatas

Apart from these four sects of Śaivism there were many others, the earliest of them being the Śiva-Bhāgavatas mentioned by Patañjali.

<sup>1</sup>Lorenzen, David N., *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*, Berkeley, 1972, Preface, p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>Vide table given on pp. 7-10 of Lorenzen's work. Also see Bhandarkar, *VSMR*, p. 170 f.

While commenting on Pāṇini Śūtra V. 2.76 he discusses the formation of the words *āyahśūlika* and *daṇḍājina* and explains that a Śiva-Bhāgavata is an *āyahśūlika* (one with an iron lance) for he seeks to obtain his end by violence which could be achieved by mild and temperate means. He does not comment on the word *daṇḍājina*, but it is obvious that a club and hyde-garment were also the characteristic feature of the Śiva-Bhāgavatas. Patañjali also uses the word *rabhasa* (forceful way) in describing their rituals. Following R.G. Bhandarkar, J.N. Banerjea finds similarities between them and the later Pāśupatas and suggests that the Śiva-Bhāgavatas mentioned by Patañjali were pre-Lakuliśa Pāśupatas. He sees Lakuliśa as the 'systematiser' of this earlier Pāśupata order.<sup>1</sup> However, as Lorenzen points out, this theory finds no support in either of the two extant Pāśupata texts—the *Pāśupata sūtra* with the *Pañchārthabhāṣya* of Kaunḍinya and the *Ganakārikā* with the *Ratnāṭikā* attributed to Bhāsarvajña which prove that as early as the Gupta period, the time to which Kaunḍinya is generally assigned, Lakuliśa was regarded as the founder of the Pāśupata sect.<sup>2</sup>

We ourselves feel that the Śiva-Bhāgavatas were no other than the Siboi of the Classical writers, for not only their names Śiva and Siboi are identical, but like the Śiva-Bhāgavatas the Siboi were also characterized by hyde-dress and clubs. The facts that Patañjali flourished almost in the same period to which the Classical references to the Siboi belong, and that the former refers to an *udīchyagrāma* (northern village) Śivapura (which thus could have been the city of the Siboi) make this suggestion stronger.

### *Pāśupatas : the Problem of the Historicity of Śrīkaṇṭha*

The earliest references to the Pāśupatas are probably found in the *Mbh.* At once place the Epic mentions five religious doctrines—Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pāñcharātra, the Vedas, and Pāśupata and says that the last was propounded by Śiva, who is also called Umāpati, Bhūtapati, Śrīkaṇṭha and Brahmasuta. It has been suggested by

<sup>1</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 74 f.; *DHI*, pp. 448-52; *Comp. History of India*, II, pp. 396-400.

<sup>2</sup>Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

R.G. Bhandarkar tentatively<sup>1</sup> and by V.S. Pathak emphatically<sup>2</sup> that a historical person named Śrīkaṇṭha was the founder of the Pāśupata order. Bagchi<sup>3</sup> has also casually suggested that Lakulīśa was probably the disciple of Śrīkaṇṭha. On the other hand, it has been argued<sup>4</sup> that the *Mbh.* passage in question clearly refers to god Śiva and not to a deified human being and that most of the allusions to Śrīkaṇṭha which Pathak cites in support of his argument seem to denote the god Śiva-Śrīkaṇṭha and only one from the *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta makes any connection between Śrīkaṇṭha and the Pāśupata doctrine.

### Lakulīśa

Lakulīśa (with its variants Lakuleśa, Nakulīśa, Lakulīśvara etc.) is generally regarded as the founder of the Pāśupata order. Legends about his birth and priesthood appear mainly in the *Vāyu* and *Liṅga Purāṇas*, the *Kārāvana Māhātmya*, and a few early medieval inscriptions. According to the *Kārāvana Māhātmya* Śiva was born as the son of a Brāhmaṇa couple named Viśvarāja and Sudarśanā in the village of Ulkāpurī (mod. Avakhal, near Baroda). He performed several superhuman feats as an infant, died when he was only seven months old, was taken by tortoises to the Jaleśvara-liṅga where he was brought back to life and thereafter went to Kāyāvarohaṇa where he took up his priestly mission. In the *Vāyu* and *Liṅga Purāṇas* Śiva predicts that in the twenty-eighth yuga, when Kṛṣṇa would incarnate as Vāsudeva, he will become incarnate as the brahmachārin Lakulin by entering a corpse in a cremation ground at Kāyārohaṇa (*Vāyu*) or Kāyāvatāra (*Liṅga*), obviously identical with Kāyāvarohaṇa, and that he would have four pupils—Kuśika, Garga, Mitra and Kaurushya—who would resort to the Yoga of Maheśvara and in the end would go to the Rudraloka. The stone inscription of 971 A.D. from the Ekliṅgaji temple near Udaipur<sup>5</sup> states that in the country of Bhṛgukachchha, (modern Bharuch or

<sup>1</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *VSMR*, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Pathak, V.S., *History of Śaiva Cults in Northern India from Inscriptions*, Varanasi, 1960, pp. 4-8.

<sup>3</sup>Bagchi in *History of Bengal*, ed. by R.C. Majumdar, 1943, p. 405.

<sup>4</sup>Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 174 f.

<sup>5</sup>*JBBRAS*, XXII, p. 151-65. Cf. Vyas, *IEI*, XXX, pp. 8-12; Bühler, *IEI*, I, pp. 271-87.



Broach) propitiated by the sage Bhṛgu Śiva became incarnate as an ascetic holding a club (*lakula*) at Kāyāvarohaṇa. It also mentions sages Kuśika etc. and others conversant with the Pāśupata yoga. The Paldi inscription<sup>1</sup> of 1116 A.D., also found near Udaipur, says that when Śiva saw the tree of dharma being destroyed by the axe of the Kaliyuga, he descended to earth at Kāyāvarohaṇa in Bhṛgukachchha. The Chintra praśasiti<sup>2</sup> of Sāraṅgadeva, a late thirteenth century inscription from Somnath (Gujarat), mentions that Śiva came to Lāṭa (South Gujarat) and dwelt at Kārohaṇa as Bhaṭṭāraka Lakulīśa and his four pupils—Kuśika, Gargya, Kaurusha and Maitreya, also arrived (*avateruh*) at this place in order to learn the special conduct (*charyā*) of the Pāśupata vow (*vrata*). The fourfold lineage (*jāti*) of those ascetics then came into being and adorned all the land girded by the four oceans. The names of the four disciples of Lakulīśa are also given by Rājaśekhara and Guṇaratna.

The date of Lakulīśa has been a matter of controversy. Viśuddhamuni mentions twenty-eight incarnations of Śiva, Lakulīśa being the last. On the other hand Rājaśekhara and Haribhadra mention Śiva's eighteen incarnations, Nakulīśa being the first.<sup>3</sup> The Paurāṇika tradition makes Lakulīśa a contemporary of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa probably to impart him the aura of antiquity or to emphasize that he played the same role in Śaivism which Kṛṣṇa played in Bhāgavatism.<sup>4</sup> Fleet initially identified him with the Kālāmukha priest Lakulīśvara paṇḍita who presided over the Pañchaliṅga temple in Belagave in 1035 A.D., but abandoned this opinion later in the light of the discoveries of D.R. Bhandarkar.<sup>5</sup> R.G. Bhandarkar dated the rise of the Pāśupata system mentioned in the *Mbh.* and presumably Lakulīśa as well, about a century after the rise of the Pāñcharātra system, i.e. about the second century B.C.<sup>6</sup> The problem advanced towards solution when in 1931 D.R. Bhandarkar published the Mathurā pillar inscription of Chandragupta II, which records a donation by the Māheśvara teacher Uditāchārya of two liṅgas named

<sup>1</sup>Vyas, *EI*, XXX, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Bühler, *EI*, I, p. 274; Fleet, *JRAS*, for 1907, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup>Sinha, Jadunath, *Schools of Śaivism*, Calcutta, 1970, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>Fleet, *EI*, VI, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup>*JRAS*, for 1907, p. 420.

<sup>6</sup>Bhandarkar, *VSMR*, p. 166.

after his teacher, Bhagavat Kapila, and teacher's teacher Bhagavat Upamita. Uditāchārya is described as tenth in descent from Bhagavat Kuśika and fourth in descent from Bhagavat Parāśara. Bhandarkar identified this Kuśika with Kuśika, the disciple of Lakuliśa and, as the inscription is dated 380 A.D., he assigned Lakuliśa to the first half of the second century A.D.<sup>1</sup> However, as pointed out by V.S. Pathak, there were at least two Kuśikas among the spiritual descendants of Lakuliśa. Rajaśekhara mentions that seventeen preceptors flourished in this line from Lakuliśa to Rāsikara. This list includes Kuśika I, the disciple of Lakuliśa and Kuśika II who was the tenth tīrtheśa. Pathak is inclined to place Rāsikara, the seventeenth tīrtheśa, in the early fourth century A.D. and hence Uditāchārya, who flourished in 380 A.D., could have been the tenth from Kuśika II. It would mean that Kuśika of the Mathurā record is Kuśika II and Kuśika I, the disciple of Lakuliśa, flourished in about second century B.C.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The Jātis (Branches) of the Pāśupatas*

According to the Chintra praśasti four branches or Jātis sprung forth from the four disciples of Lakuliśa. The Jāti of Kuśika has been noted above. Chintra praśasti discloses the existence of the ascetics belonging to the Gārgya gotra. As the word *gotra* has been defined by Abhinavagupta as 'disciples of a teacher,' Gārgya gotra would mean the disciples in the line of Garga. The Chintra praśasti mentions Sthānādhipa Kārttikarāśi 'an ornament of Gārgya gotra', Taporāśi, Vālmīkirāśi and his disciple Gaṇḍa Tripurāntaka. The Jātis or branches which originated with Kaurusha and Maitreya are not known. R.G. Bhandarkar<sup>3</sup> tried to connect Kaurush with Kārukasiddhāntins identified with Kālānanas or Kālāmukhas. V.S. Pathak supports him and points out that an inscription of 1177 describes Kālānanas as adhering to the Lākulāgama *samaya* and another record gives the history of Kālāmukha ascetics who traced their

<sup>1</sup>*EI*, XXI, p. 1-9. Cf. Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, pp. 99-105. It is true that the words Lakuliśa and Pāśupata do not occur in this record, but the reference to the Māheśvaras and the depiction of a Lakuliśa-like figure on the pillar makes it almost certain that Uditāchārya was a Pāśupata.

<sup>2</sup>Pathak, *History of Śaiva Cults*, p. 9, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *op. cit.*, p. 172.

origin to Lakulīśa.<sup>1</sup> Against this Lorenzen argues that phonetically Kāruka is not close to Kaurusha and that the Kālāmukha epigraphs do not mention Kaurusha anywhere.<sup>2</sup>

Besides these branches an Āgamika tradition describes the continuation of the Lakulīśa doctrine through Ananta gotra. Two other gotras, Chāpala and Praṇāma, are also mentioned in inscriptions.<sup>3</sup>

### *Pāśupata Doctrines*

The Pāśupata doctrines are mainly known from the *Pāśupatasūtra*, Kaunḍinya's *Pañchārthabhāṣya* on it and Haradata's *Gaṇakārikā* and Bhāsarvajña's *Ratnaṭīkā* on it. Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (c. 1400 A.D.) summarises the *Pañchārthabhāṣya* and the *Gaṇakārikā* and reproduces portions of the *Ratnaṭīkā*.<sup>4</sup>

It is claimed by the Pāśupatas that the *Pāśupatasūtra* was written by Paśupati in his Lakulīśa incarnation and was taught by him to Kuśika at Ujjayinī. These sūtras contain little metaphysical speculation and elaborately deal with the rituals practised by the Pāśupata ascetics. They do not refer to the theory of karman, transmigration, worship of the phallic symbol, and the doctrines of Māyā and nirguṇa Brahman. They reject the worship of gods and sacrifices to them and also the practice of śrāddha (offering of food to the spirits of the departed ancestors). They regard the Brāhmaṇas alone as eligible for dīkṣhā to the Pāśupata spiritual discipline, look upon women and the Śūdras with disrespect, recommend a rigid code of conduct for the ascetics, and stress meditation on the mystic syllable 'Om'.<sup>5</sup>

Kaunḍinya divides Pāśupata doctrine into five principal Topics (*Pañchārthas*): Effect (*kārya*), Cause (*kāraṇa*), Union (*yoga*), Observance (*vidhi*) and End of Sorrow (*duḥkḥānta*). The Pāśupata theology is contained in these Topics (minus the fourth which is concerned with *vidhi*). These five Topics are described as the central feature of the Pāśupata (or Māheśvara) doctrine also in the

<sup>1</sup>Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. 10 f.

<sup>2</sup>Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

<sup>3</sup>Pathak, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>4</sup>Sinha, Jadunath, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*



comments of Śaṅkarāchārya, Vāchaspati Miśra and Bhāskarāchārya on *Brahmasūtra* II.2.3.

The first Topic is Effect or *Kārya*. Effects are vidyā, kāla, and paśu or bound individual souls. Bound souls are produced, favoured, veiled, influenced by time and modified. They are produced, maintained and dissolved in God as stars appear and disappear in the sky. They abide in Him, and He is their abode, seat, or substratum.

The second Topic is Cause or *Kāraṇa*. This is defined simply as God or Īśvara or Śiva. The Pāsupata faith is thoroughly theistic and consequently God is described as the creator, destroyer and supporter of the universe. He is the supreme cause of bound souls, the world, fetters, etc. He has two major aspects—one which is immanent and manifold (*sakāla*) and the other which is transcendent and formless (*nishkāla*). Both are characterised by unlimited Power of Knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*) and Power of Action (*krtya-śakti*). Speech is incapable of expressing his formless aspect. Kaundinya and the *Ratnaṭīkā* also emphasize God's absolute independence (*svatantratā*). It means that God acts without regard for human karman (*karmādīnirapeksha*). God's will is thus placed over and above even the moral order (*dharma*).<sup>1</sup>

The third Topic is *Yoga*. Yoga is the union of an individual soul (*ātman*) with God (*Īśvara*). Patañjali defines yoga as the suppression of mental modes (*chittavṛttinirodha*), withdrawing the mind from all objects. But, according to the Pāsupatas, yoga is the union of a soul with God through trance or complete absorption of the mind in Him.

*Vidhi* or Observance, the fourth Topic, is an operation which brings about righteousness. It is of two types—primary and secondary. Primary vidhi is conduct or *charyā* which is of two kinds—vows and doors (or means). The vows consist in besmearing the body with ashes and laying down in ashes, upahāra or six definite practices (namely, laughing, dancing, huḍukkāra, prostration, and inaudible repetition), muttering (*japa*) and circumbulation (*pradakṣiṇā*). The means or doors are *krathana* (snoring or acting as if asleep when one is not), *spandana* (shaking one's limbs as if afflicted by wind-disease), *mandana* (walking as if crippled), *śṛṅgārāṇa*

<sup>1</sup>Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 190.



(making amorous gestures in the presence of women), *avitatkarana* (acting as if devoid of judgement), and *avltdbhāṣaṇa* (uttering senseless or contradictory words).

Secondary observances are those which are intended to help the charyā. These include besmearing the body with ashes after worship, removing the sense of indecency attached to begging and eating the remnant of what others have eaten. Begged food is the best and purest food and mendicancy is the best penance as it generates the highest good. One should beg food of Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Sūdras, but not of the depraved sinners.

The curious custom of courting dishonour by disreputable behaviour is the most distinctive feature of the Pāsupata cult. According to the *Pāsupatasūtra* and Kaunḍinya's commentary thereon, the chief rationale for this behaviour is the transfer of good and bad karman and the cultivation of the attitude of detachment from worldly attractions.

Salvation in Pāsupata doctrine is the fifth principal Topic. It is called *Duḥkhānta* or End of Sorrow. It is achieved only by the grace of God. The designation of Salvation as End of Sorrow has a rather negative ring. Bhāskarāchārya claims that the Pāsupatas, Vaiśeshikas, Naiyāyikas and Kāpālikas all hold that End of Sorrow and Moksha are identical. The *Ratnaṭīkā* distinguishes between two types of End of Sorrow—the Impersonal (*anātmaka*) and the Personal (*sātmaka*). In the Impersonal End of Sorrow souls are without attributes and resemble stones. Personal End of Sorrow, however, is a state of perfection (*siddhi*) characterized by the power of Lordship (*aiśvarya*) of Maheśvara. The soul does not dissolve or become absorbed in Īśvara or Brahman as in monistic Vedānta, but remains inseparably tied to God in the state called *Rudra-sāyujya* in the *Sūtras*.

#### *Popularity of the Pāsupata Sect*

By the time of Harsha (606-646), and probably as early as the Gupta age, Pāsupata temples had come into existence in most parts of India. The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang met or heard reports about ash-smeared followers of the outer way, i.e. Pāsupata heretics, in the greater part of North India. Two early seventh century inscriptions registering grants to Pāsupata ascetics have been found in the distant South-East Asia. References to Pāsupatas also occur in

Pallava king Mahendravarman's *Mattavilāsa* and, indirectly, in Varāhamihira's *Brhatsamhitā*. Sanskrit writers from Bāṇa onwards mention them frequently, and from about the tenth century inscrip-tional references become quite numerous. Post-Gupta sculptures of Lakuliśa have been found throughout India, specially in the South.

Here it is necessary to remember that the term Pāśupata was used not only for a particular sect of Śaivism, but sometimes also for the Śiva-worshippers in general. Yuan Chwang mentions Pāśupatas twelve times in his book. But his description does not agree with that of Bāṇa and Bhavabhūti. As pointed out by R.G. Bhandarkar there were 3 classes of Śiva-worshippers : (1) ascetics of the various Śaiva sects usually grouped under the name of Pāśupata, (2) their lay followers, and (3) ordinary people who had no connection with any particular sect. People like Kālidāsa, Bāṇa and Śrī Harsha etc., who adore Śiva in the beginning of their works, could have been the lay followers of any Śaiva sect; but most likely they belonged to the third category.

### *The Kāpālikas*

Unfortunately no religious texts of either the Kāpālikas or the Kālāmukhas have survived. They are mainly known from the accounts left by their opponents such as Yāmuna and Rāmānuja, casual references in other literary texts and the information contained in epigraphic grants to their temples and maṭhas.

According to Lorenzen<sup>1</sup> it appears likely that the Kāpālikas originated in South India or the Deccan. They existed in most of the Deccan plateau as early as the eighth century. It is only in sources later than the eighth century that their presence in Gujarat, Bundelkhand, the Vindhya hills and other parts of India is indicated.

The date of the foundation of the Kāpālika order is impossible to establish. The earliest occurrence of the word *kāpālin* (one who bears a skull) is probably that in the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (III, 245). But in this passage *kāpālin* has the sense only of bearing a skull and does not imply the existence of a sect or order of Kāpālins. In the *Maitrāyaṇiya Upa.* Kāpālins are mentioned as those who

<sup>1</sup>Lorenzen, *op. cit.*

hypocritically wear red (*kāshāya*) robes and earrings (*kuṇḍala*) and with whom it is improper to associate. But this passage of the text may be of fairly late date. The Prakrit *Gāthāsaptasatī*, traditionally ascribed to the first century A.D., contains a verse describing a 'new' female Kāpālikā who incessantly besmears herself with ashes from the funeral pyre of her lover. But the date of the gāthā is uncertain.

(The *Lalitavistara* mentions certain 'fools' who seek purification by smearing their bodies with ashes, wearing red (*kāshāya*), garments, shaving their heads, and carrying a triple-staff (*tridaṇḍa*), a pot, a skull, and a Khaṭvāṅga. This is clearly a reference to the Kāpālikas. Varāhamihira in his *Brhatsaṃhitā* refers to the Kāpāla vow and in his *Brhajjātaka* enumerates seven classes of ascetics including Vṛddhas who are identified by Utpala with the Kāpālikas. The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang saw in India different types of ascetics including those who covered themselves with ashes, or made chaplets of bones which they wore as crowns on their heads, or wore skull garlands. In his *Harshacharita* Bāṇa describes Bhairavāchārya, a dākṣiṇātya saint, who performed a Tāntrika ritual appropriate for a Kāpālika. In Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracharita* prince Mantragupta meets an evil ascetic in a forest near the cremation ground outside the capital of Kalinga.<sup>1</sup>

(The Kāpālikas are mentioned disparagingly in several Purāṇas. The *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Kūrma Purāṇas* assert that in the Kaliyuga Kāshāyins, Nirgranthas, Kāpālikas, Veda-sellers, tirtha-sellers, and other heretics opposed to varṇāśramadharmā will arise. The *Brahmāṇḍa P.* claims that Svayambhū (Śiva) created Pāsupatayoga first and Kāpālayoga last. The *Skanda P.* prescribes, as part of the worship of the goddess Parameśvarī, the distribution of pots of wine (*surāsava*) to Kāpālikas and male and female slaves.

(Some of the most valuable material about the Kāpālikas appears in the legendary biographies of Śaṅkarāchārya (A.D. 788-820). The story of Śaṅkara's encounter with a treacherous Kāpālika named Ugra-Bhairava appears in Mādhava's *Śaṅkara-digvijaya*, of his battle with the militant Krakacha of Karnaṭaka in the works of Mādhava and Ānandagiri and of his debate with

<sup>1</sup>For references, see Lorenzen.



the casteless hedonist Unmatta-Bhairava, in the work of Ānandagiri and is repeated in similar words by Dhanapatisūri.<sup>1</sup>

(Several inscriptions from the various parts of India mention Kapāleśvara temples. The Nirmand (Himachal Pradesh) copper plate grant of Mahāsāmanta Mahārāja Samudrasena<sup>2</sup> records the donation of a village to support the worship of Śiva in the form of Mihireśvara at a temple dedicated to Kapāleśvara. A king named Śarvavarman is also said to have given land at the former installation of the god Kapāleśvara of this temple. An inscription from a modern temple of Kavalji (Kāpālin) in Kota region of Rajasthan contains an introductory eulogy of Gaṇeśa and Kapāleśvara. (The most famous Kapāleśvara temple is located at Mylapore, a suburb of Madras. At one time the Paśupatinātha temple of Nepal was probably associated with the Kāpālikas) for the undated Chhatreśvara inscription from this temple, belonging to the reign of King Jishnugupta (seventh century A.D.) refers to the Somakhaḍḍukas in the congregation of the Muṇḍaśṛṅkhalika-Pāśupatāchāryas.<sup>3</sup>

(Sculptures of god Kapāleśvara or Kapāla-Bhairava and goddess Kāpālīkā or Kapāla-Bhairavī are found in many early medieval temples, particularly in South India.)

(The Kāpālikas are usually called Mahāvratadharas, a term also applied for the Kālāmukhas. The Igatpuri copper plate inscription of Pulikeśin II records a grant for the worship of god Kapāleśvara and for the maintenance of the Mahāvratins. The best known rite by this name is described in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and a few other early works. It is highly unlikely, however, that this ritual was resurrected several hundred years after it had almost died out. Another Mahāvrata which may be recalled in this connection is the chief penance prescribed for the removal of the sin of (accidentally) killing a Brāhmaṇa. It is called Mahāvrata in the *Vishṇusmṛti*. In this vrata the penitent carries a skull on his staff, and this skull is generally identified as the skull of the person slain. According to Lorenzen this Mahāvrata was adopted by the

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 286f.

<sup>3</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aurā Sāṁskṛtika Itihāsa*, Varanasi, 1973, p. 173., Cf. Gnoli, *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters*, No. 59; cf. also No. 65.



Kāpālikas because it was the penance for the most heinous of all crimes, the killing of a Brāhmaṇa. They might have reasoned that if they were in reality already guiltless, the performance of this penance would result in an unprecedented accumulation of religious merit and hence of magical powers (*siddhis*).

In a number of sources the doctrine of the Kāpālikas is called *Saumya* or *Somāsiddhānta*. However, none of the sources which refer to *Somasiddhānta* says much about the term. Several *ṭīkā*s on the *Prabodhachandrodaya* derive the word *soma* from the compound *sa-Umā* (with *Umā*, i.e. *Pārvatī*). Although this etymology is not historically correct, by the time of *Kṛṣṇamiśra* *Soma* or *Someśvara* had become a common name for *Śiva*.

The keystone of the Kāpālika faith was *bhakti*, personal devotion to a personal god usually identified as *Śiva* in his *Bhairava* incarnation.)

In *Ānandagiri's Śaṅkara-vijaya* the Kāpālikas are made to proclaim *Bhairava* to be the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe and lord of all the gods. The epithet world-creator (*jagat-kartṛ*) suggests the dualistic distinction between the material and instrumental causes of the universe which the *Brahmasūtra* commentators attribute to the Kāpālikas and other worshippers of *Paśupati*.)

In the *Śaṅkara-vijaya* of *Ānandagiri Bodholbana-nityānanda* and his followers also claim that *Bhairava* has eight major forms: *Asitana*, *Ruru*, *Chanda*, *Krodha*, *Unmatta*, *Kāpālin*, *Bhīṣhaṇa* and *Samhāra*. They identify the first seven of these forms with the gods *Vishṇu*, *Brahmā*, *Sūrya*, *Rudra*, *Indra*, *Chandra* and *Yama* respectively. The eighth, *Samhāra-Bhairava*, is *Bhairava* himself. The remaining gods are merely his 'portions'.

The omnipotent deity of the Kāpālikas demands both propitiation and imitation from his devotees. In this respect the Kāpālika faith differs from other theistic religions only in procedure. If their critics are to be believed, the Kāpālikas specialised in human sacrifice. Allusions to Kāpālikas performing human sacrifices, making offerings of human flesh, or doing *pūjā* with the aid of corpses are found in the *Mālatīmādhava*, *Prabodhachandrodaya* and many other works. *Śaṅkarāchārya's* Kāpālika opponent *Krakacha* argues: 'If he (*Kāpālin-Śiva*) does not receive worship with liquor and blood-smeared lotuses which are human heads, how can he attain

joy when his body is embraced by the lotus-eyed Umā. . . .?’ There is also some evidence to suggest that the Kāpālikas occasionally practised the various forms of self-mutilation such as cutting of flesh from their own bodies for sacrificial oblations. They drank wine and even ate human flesh. In Yaśaḥpāla’s *Moharājaparājaya* a Kāpālika says that one obtains Śivasthāna by eating human flesh in the skull of a noble man. The lost skull bowl of Mahendravarman’s Kāpālin was full of roast meat. Śaṅkara’s opponent Krakacha fills his own skull bowl with surā through his power of meditation. Unmatta-Bhairava, a Kāpālika opponent of Śaṅkara, proudly declares that his father and grandfather were liquor makers. In the *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana* a Kāpālin similarly advocates wine and women as the road to salvation recommended by Śiva, and in the *Prabodhachandrodaya* a Kāpālika describes wine as the ‘remedy against (transmigratory) existence prescribed by Bhairava’.

The Kāpālika in the *Chandakauśika* implies a sexual or at least a sensual conception of moksha when he praises the immortal world where the siddhas frolic on the peaks of Meru. In Rāmānuja’s Śrībhāṣya, the Kāpālas declare that he who meditates on the Self as seated in the female vulva attains nirvāṇa. This statement may reflect a partial sublimation of overt sexual ritual. Their addiction to meat and wine, as well as sex, should be associated with the five ‘Ma’ sounds (*pañchamakaras*) of the Tāntrika tradition.

Most Tāntrika sects were well-infused with the doctrines and practices of Hathayoga, and it is unlikely that the Kāpālikas were an exception. References to the magical powers of the Kāpālika ascetics appear in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* stories of Madanamañjarī, Chandrasvāmin, Devadatta, and the Kāpālika spy. In Jambhaladatta’s *Vetālapañchaviṃśati* the Kāpālika mutters a great incantation (*mahāmantra*) in order to obtain siddhi. The Kāpālin-Pāśupata Aśvapāda in Kalhaṇa’s *Rājataranginī* displays the ability to remember his past lives and magically transport his disciple to Kashmir. Kṛṣṇamiśra’s *Prabodhachandrodaya* and Bhavabhūta’s *Mālatīmādhava* also contain allusions to the *siddhis* of the Kāpālikas.

The aim of a Kāpālika’s religious endeavours is, thus, not simply the attainment of a state of divine bliss. On a more worldly level, he seeks magical yogic powers (*siddhis*) such as (1) *animā*, the power of becoming small; (2) *laghimā*, the power of levitation;

(3) *garimā*, the power of becoming heavy; (4) *mahimā*, the power of becoming limitlessly large; (5) *īṣṭva*, control over body and mind; (6) *prākāmya*, irresistible will; (7) *vaśitva*, control over the five elements; and (8) *kāmāvasāyitva*, fulfilment of desires. Similar lists are found in the *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa, the *Tāntrika Prapañchasāra*, and other works.

### *The Kālāmukhas*

The Kālāmukha ascetics inhabited mainly the Karṇāṭaka region during the eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The name Kālāmukha, sometimes spelt as Kālamukha, may refer to their practice of marking their foreheads with a black streak. Apart from the remarks of Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja the sources for the Kālāmukhas are nearly all epigraphic ones. Judging from the large number of epigraphs recording donations to Kālāmukha temples and maṭhas, these ascetics must have wielded considerable influence in the Karṇāṭaka region. They also served as the rājagurus of the Chālukya kings.<sup>1</sup>

The Southern inscriptions reveal the existence of at least two major divisions of the Kālāmukha order—the Śaktipariśad and the Siṃhapariśad. The number of extant Śaktipariśad epigraphs is much greater and they have been found at a larger number of sites. Four separate subdivisions of the Śaktipariśad are distinguished, and it may be assumed that some others also existed whose names have not survived. The most prominent division was centred in the Kedāreśvara temple at Belagave in Shimoga District. The form of Śiva who presided over the Belagave temple was Dakṣiṇa-Kedāreśvara.

According to Rāmānuja the Kālāmukhas held the following as the means for attaining desires concerning this world and the next : eating food in a skull, besmearing the body with the ashes of a dead body, eating the ashes, holding a club, keeping a pot of wine and worshipping the gods as seated therein.

No religious text of the Kālāmukhas is extant, and the religious information contained in the inscriptions tends to discredit rather than corroborate Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja on the doctrines of the Kālāmukhas. More importantly, the records

<sup>1</sup>Pathak, V.S., *History of Śaiva Cults in Northern India*, pp. 46-50.



indicate that the Kālāmukhas were an offshoot of the Pāśupatas: (1) Both these sects revered the legendary teacher Lakulīśa. (2) The ascetics of both adopted similar or identical names and undertook pilgrimages to Kedāranātha and Śrīparvata. (3) The philosophical content of the Īśvara-kartṛ-vāda propounded by the Kālāmukha munīśvara Bonteyamuni of Hombal is little different from the Pāśupata doctrine of Īśvara as Cause (*kāraṇa*) of the material universe (*kārya*). (4) Inscriptions at Nesargi and Sirasangi seem to equate Kālāmukha, Mahāvratin and Mahāpāśupata. (5) Lākulasiddhānta, the Doctrine of Lākula, was one of the chief subjects studied at the Koḍiya-maṭha of the Kālāmukhas.

Several interesting similarities are found also between the Somnath Pāśupatas and the Southern Kālāmukhas. The Chintra praśasti of 1287 A.D. records the consecration of five liṅga temples in Somnath; and the Pañchaliṅga temple in Belagave in South belonged to the Kālāmukhas. The five liṅgas at Somnath were consecrated by a priest named Tripurāntaka; and one of the Kālāmukha temples in Belagave was dedicated to the god Tripurāntaka. The Somnath Tripurāntaka's preceptor was Vālmīkirāśi; this name is also found among the early priests of the Mūvara-koṇeya-santati of the Southern Kālāmukhas. The Somnath record describes a pilgrimage undertaken by Tripurāntaka during which he visited two sites with important Kālāmukha associations—Kedāra in the Himālayas and Śrīparvata in Kurnool District. These similarities show that the Pāśupatas and Kālāmukhas continued to share a large body of common traditions in addition to having a common base in the teachings of Lakulīśa.

The second of the two known parishads of the Kālāmukhas is the Siṃhapaṛiśad or Lion Assembly. Grants to temples of this Paṛiśad have been found in the Guntur, Bellary, Bijapur and Gulbarga Districts. But this group was less influential than the Śaktipaṛiśad, or at least received less royal and official support.

In addition to the records left by the Śakti- and Siṃha-paṛiśads, there are a large number of Kālāmukha epigraphs which cannot with certainty be said to belong to either organization. These epigraphs are approximately contemporary with and are spread over approximately the same regions as those of the two known paṛiśads.

It is fairly certain that most, if not all, Kālāmukha priests



claimed Brāhmaṇa status. This we gather from a 1113 A.D. inscription which calls Someśvara of Belagave a Sārāsvata, from a few scattered references to the gotras of the Kālāmukha priests, and from the common ending to many of their names—*paṇḍitadeva*.

### *The Vīraśaiva or Liṅgāyata Sect*

The early history of the Vīraśaivas or the Liṅgāyatas is buried in a maze of legends. The principal early leader of the sect was Basava (Sanskrit Vṛṣabha=bull). The chief Vīraśaiva sources for his life-history are two Kannaḍa works—the *Basava Purāṇa*, written in about 1370 A.D., and the *Channa-Basava Purāṇa*, written in about 1585 A.D. The *Basava P.* avers that Basava was the son of a Brāhmaṇa named Māḍirāja and his wife Mādalāmbikā of Bagevadi (in Bijapur District). Māḍirāja belonged to the Ārādhyā sect. Basava's life was the life of political activities. He was married to the daughter of Baladeva, the chief minister of Bijjala, the Kalachuri king of Kalyāṇa (1145-67 A.D.) and gave his own sister in marriage to the king. He was appointed in Baladeva's place after the latter's death. After Basava's appointment, he and his nephew Channa-Basava began to popularize the Vīraśaiva doctrines and won a great number of adherents. In the process they rapidly depleted Bijjala's treasury with liberal gifts to the jaṅgamas, the Vīraśaiva priests. This alienated the king who tried to punish Basava. But before he could do so Basava fled. The king set out to capture him, but Basava defeated the king in battle. The king then reinstated Basava to his old position but there could be no true reconciliation. After some time Basava caused the king to be assassinated and himself went to the shrine of Saṅgameśvara at the confluence of the Malaprabha and Krishna rivers and was absorbed into the godhead.

The *Bijjalarāyacharita*, a Jaina work, gives an account of Basava and his relations with Bijjala from the Jaina point of view and mentions Basava's sister as having been given to the king as a mistress. It also claims that after the regicide the murdered king's son chased Basava to Ulavi on the Malabar coast where the former minister ignominiously committed suicide by throwing himself into a well. Basava's nephew Channa-Basava was later reconciled with the new king and became the sole leader of the Vīraśaivas. However the essential facts in the

two accounts are almost similar and may, therefore, be accepted.

As both these sources are relatively late, J.F. Fleet thought it better to ignore them. But as pointed out by K.A.N. Sastri a genealogy contained in the Arjunawada inscriptions of Yādava Kannara (1260 A.D.) mentions Basava or Saṅgana-Basava as the younger son of Mādirāja described as 'tardavāḍi madhyagrāma-Bāgavāḍi-puravarādhīśvara'.<sup>1</sup> These two persons, Sastri rightly believes, must be the famous Vīraśaiva and his father.

From the *Basava P.* it does not appear that Basava was the founder of the Liṅgāyata sect. Firstly, he was obviously a scheming politician<sup>2</sup> and could hardly have been the propounder of a new sect. Secondly, in many Liṅgāyata works his name is not mentioned as that of a teacher. Thirdly, it is repeatedly assumed that Vīraśaivism existed before him. According to Fleet the founder of the Liṅgāyata sect was Ekāntada Rāmayya. His account is also given in the Second Part of the *Basava P.* This work and an inscription of about 1200 A.D.,<sup>3</sup> found at Ablur reveal that he was hostile to Jainism. A contest was held in the town between him and the Jainas. He vanquished them by offering his own head to Śiva, who restored it as good as new after seven days. The Jainas, who had promised to accept Śaivism if such a miracle happened, refused to do so even after their defeat. Ekāntada Rāmayya then destroyed their shrine and built a large temple of Vīraśaivism in its place. The Jainas appealed to Bijjala for retribution but declined his offer for a second contest with bigger stakes. Bijjala therefore dismissed their appeal and bestowed on Ekāntada Rāmayya, in the public assembly, a *jayapatra* or 'certificate of success'. The *Basava P.* represents Basava himself to have been present when Rāmayya laid this wager. So that beyond undermining the Jaina sect there is no evidence of Rāmayya's having built up the Vīraśaiva creed.

According to Lorenzen, cordial relations existed between the Vīraśaivas and the Kālāmukhas before Basava.<sup>4</sup> He points out that

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup>Some religious sayings (*vachanas*) of Basava are, however, popular. Vide Marulasiddaiah, G., 'Basava the Saint Ruler of Karnataka (Mysore)', *Professor Suryakumar Bhuyan Commemoration Volume*, Gauhati, 1966, pp. 232-37.

<sup>3</sup>Fleet, *El*, V, no. E.

<sup>4</sup>Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 169 ff.

according to an Ablur inscription Ekāntada Rāmayya delivered a sermon in the Brahmeśvara temple at Ablur which was headed by the Kālāmukha priests of the Mūvara-koṇeya-santati until at least 1144 A.D., and there is no reason to assume that it was not still in their hands when Ekāntada Rāmayya visited it a few years later. It is even conceivable that at the time of delivering his sermon Ekāntada himself was a member of the Kālāmukha sect. Secondly, many other former Kālāmukha temples are now controlled by the Vīraśaivas including the Kedāreśvara temple in Belagave, the Trikūṭeśvara temple at Gaḍag (Dharwar District), and the Kālāmukha temples at Huli (Belgaum District). The Brahmeśvara temple also is now known as the temple of Basaveśvara and is a Vīraśaiva shrine. Thirdly, the priests of the Vīraśaivas are called jaṅgamas, a term they explain as 'liṅgas in movement'. In a number of inscriptions the same word is applied to the Kālāmukha priests.

According to R.G. Bhandarkar, however, the Vīraśaiva sect originated out of the Ārādhyā sect which existed even in the days of Śaṅkara who, according to Ānandagiri, came into conflict with it.<sup>1</sup> The Liṅgāyata reform was carried out within its limits, and a portion of the Ārādhyā sect adopted the new creed and developed it, while another remained orthodox and staunch to some of the Brāhmaṇical practices. Firstly, in the beginning of the *Basava P. Nārada* goes to Śiva and tells him that on earth there were devotees of Viṣṇu, Vaidikas, Jainas and Bauddhas but there were no devotees of Śiva himself. He mentions Viśveśvarārādhyā, Paṇḍitārādhyā, Ekorāma, the great Yogin, and others as having flourished from time to time to establish Śivabhakti, but laments that there is no one now. Śiva, thereupon, asks Nandin to become incarnate on earth for the promotion of his religion. In the list of the Śaiva āchāryas, whom Nārada mentions, some obviously belonged to the Ārādhyā sect. Secondly, in connection with Dīkshās or initiatory ceremonies of Liṅgāyatas it is necessary to place four metallic vessels full of water at the four cardinal points and one in the middle. This last belongs to the person to be consecrated as Guru who is supposed to represent an old Āchārya or teacher of the name

<sup>1</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 192 ff., 199, n. 1. S.C. Nandimath supports Bhandarkar (*A Handbook of Vīraśaivism*, Delhi, 1979, p. 8ff.) and also the view that the Vīraśaivas slowly absorbed several elements and maṭhas of the Kālāmukhas, (*ibid.*, p. 5f).



of Viśveśvārādhyā, and the other four to the four other priests chosen as having been brought up in the schools of Revāṇasiddha, Marulasiddha, Ekorāma and Paṇḍitārādhyā, and connected with certain maṭhas. Of these five teachers some are Ārādhyas and three at least are mentioned in the *Basava P.* as having preceded Basava (*supra*).

According to the Vīraśaivas the One Highest Brahman, characterised by existence (*Sat*), intelligence (*Chit*), and joy (*Ānanda*), is the essence of Śiva (*Śivatattva*) and is called Sthala. Several explanations as to why it is called Sthala are given, two of which are based upon artificial etymology. "By the agitation of its innate power (*Śakti*), that Sthala becomes divided into two : (1) Liṅgasthala (2) Aṅgasthala. Liṅgasthala is Śiva or Rudra and is to be worshipped or adored, while the Aṅgasthala is the individual soul, the worshipper or adorer. In the same manner the Śakti or power divides herself into two by her own will, one of the parts resorting to Śiva and being called Kalā, and the other resorting to the individual soul and being called Bhakti, or devotion . . . . The Śakti or power makes one an object of worship, while Bhakti makes one a worshipper; therefore, the former exists in the Liṅga or Śiva, and the latter in the Aṅga or individual soul. Eventually, by this Bhakti, there is a union between the soul and Śiva." "The Liṅga is Śiva himself, and not a mere external emblem of him".<sup>1</sup>

The Vīraśaiva belief that the original essence of Śiva divides itself by its own innate power into Liṅga (God) and Aṅga (individual soul) and also becomes the creator of the world, resembles that of Rāmānuja. The Liṅgāyata school, therefore, is a school of Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified spiritual monism). Further, the method of redemption taught by this school is that of Bhakti and a path of moral and spiritual discipline up to the attainment of sāmānyasya with Śiva. In this respect also it resembles the philosophy of Rāmānuja.<sup>2</sup> Śrīkaṇṭhāchārya, a Śaiva commentator of the *Brahmasūtra*, held the same view.<sup>3</sup>

According to some scholars<sup>4</sup> the Vīraśaivas do not believe in

<sup>1</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 192 f. Cf. Kumaraswami, 'Vīraśaivism', *CHI*, IV, p. 98 f.

<sup>2</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195 f.

<sup>4</sup>For social outlook of the Liṅgāyatas vide McCormack, 'Liṅgāyat as a Sect', *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 93, Part i, London, 1963, pp. 59-71; also Sahasrabudha, M.V., 'Mahātmā Basaveśvara—A Social Reformer', *PIHC*, 1979, pp. 221-26.



the caste system. For this they quote a verse from *Viraśaivasamvardhini* which says that there is no caste system among the Viraśaivas (*na tatra jātibhedo*). But elsewhere the same work quotes the *Śaṅkarasamhitā* to prove that caste system was prescribed by Śiva himself (*Śivoktam jātimaryadām*) and that who does not believe in it is a *pāshaṇḍa* and *pāpishṭha*.<sup>1</sup>

The Liṅgāyatas abstain from meat and drink. Whether their widows are allowed to marry or not is a debatable point. R.G. Bhandarkar says that they allow their widows to remarry while according to R.K. Siddhantashastree they are expected to pass their lives in the worship of their Lord.<sup>2</sup> The Liṅgāyata women are not considered polluted during the days of monthly sickness, as is the case among Brāhmaṇical Hindus.

There is a Dikshā ceremony among the Viraśaivas corresponding to the Upanayana among the Brāhmaṇas. Instead of the Gāyatrīmantra of the latter, they have the Mantra 'Om namaś Śivāya' and have to wear the Liṅga or emblem of Śiva, in the place of Yajñopavīta. This is called the Liṅgasvāyattadīkshā. This ceremony is performed in the case of girls also. According to *Viraśaivasadāchārasaṅgraha* the Viraśaivas should perform all the saṁskāras also. In their daily ceremonies they recite the Śiva-Gāyatrī, the first two lines of which are the same as the Brāhmaṇical Gāyatrī, and the last is 'Tannaḥ Śivaḥ prachodayāt'.

The worship of the Liṅga, called Ishta-Liṅga, worn on the body, (which is regarded as necessary for their women also), is their chief worship. Attendance at temples and worship of the Liṅga therein are not regarded necessary.

### *Kaśmīra Śaivism*

Kaśmīra Śaivism is so called because the philosophers who enriched its literature belonged to Kashmir. Philosophically it is called Trika Śāstra, Trika Śāsana or simply Trika, probably either because it accepts the three out of ninety two āgamas (*Siddha*, *Nāmaka* and *Mālinī*) as more important, or because it recognises the triad Śiva, Śakti and Aṇu, or because it explains three modes

<sup>1</sup>Siddhantashastree, R.K., *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 155.

of the knowledge of Reality namely *abheda*, *bhedābheda* and *bheda*.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Trika philosophy Śāstra does not mean a book; it means eternal, self-existent wisdom. The Āgamas or Śāstras exist eternally as *parā vāk*. Therefore the wisdom set forth in Trika philosophy is originally the self-knowledge of Reality.<sup>2</sup> The Reality is variously designated as Chit, Chaitanya, Śiva, Paramaśiva and Ātman. It is both transcendent and immanent. As transcendent it is described as Śiva, as immanent as Śakti. Śiva and Śakti are the two conceptual aspects of the same Reality. Śakti is the *hṛdaya*, the *sāra*, of Śiva. Without Śakti Śiva is, as it were, *śava*, a fire without its burning power. The Trika philosophy does not give independent reality to Prakṛti as the Sāṃkhya does and at the same time it does not reduce the universe to a mere illusion as is done by the Advaita Vedānta.

R.G. Bhandarkar and others usually divide Kaśmīra Śaivism into two branches, the Spandaśāstra and the Pratyabhijñāśāstra. The latter was summarized by Mādhava in his *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. The authorship of the *Spandaśāstra* is attributed to Vasugupta and his pupil Kallaṭa. The two principal works of the system are the *Śivasūtram* or *Śivasūtrāṇi* and the *Spandakārikā* which is in fifty-one verses only. The first are said to have been revealed to Vasugupta by Śiva himself or by a Siddha. As to the second work, there are also varying traditions, one ascribing the authorship of the verses to Vasugupta and another to Kallaṭa.<sup>3</sup> Kallaṭa lived in the reign of Avantivarman (854 A.D.) wherefore his guru Vasugupta's literary activities must be referred to the beginning of the ninth century. The *Śivasūtrāṇi* and *Spandakārikā* together are called Spandasarvasva. Several others works on Spandaśāstra are known.

Somānanda is generally regarded as the founder of the Pratyabhijñā school and the work written by him is called *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*. But the principal treatises of the school are the sūtras of Udayākara and the glosses and detailed explanations written on them by Abhinavagupta (*Pratyabhijñāvimarśinī*, *Pratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī*, etc.), the pupil of Somānanda.

<sup>1</sup>Basu, Arbinda, 'Kashmir Śaivism', in *CHI*, IV, pp. 79-97.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *VSMS*, p. 184.

Abhinavagupta wrote between 993 and 1015 A.D., wherefore Somānanda must be placed in first-second quarter of the tenth century.

Kshemarāja (c. 1000 A.D.), a pupil of Abhinavagupta also wrote an important work *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*. Several other works on this philosophy are known.

Kaśmīra Śaivism is thus usually divided into two schools, Spandaśāstra and Pratyabhijñā. However Ravindra Kumar Siddhantashastree<sup>1</sup> has tried to prove that long before these two schools Trayambaka school of Śaivism flourished in Kashmir and that Kaśmīra Śaivism therefore has three branches—Trayambaka, Spanda and Pratyabhijñā. The *Śivadr̥shṭi* of Somānanda belongs to the first, the *Spandasūtras* and the *Spandakārikās* to the second, and the *Śivasūtras*, the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* of Kshemarāja and such other works to the third. In his introduction to the *Śivadr̥shṭi* Pandit Madhusudana Kaula Sastri also describes Somānanda as the follower of the Trayambaka school of Śaivism.<sup>2</sup>

The two schools of Kaśmīra Śaivism apparently cut themselves off from the old traditional Śaivism which gradually degenerated into ghastly practices of the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas. Hence the epithet Pāśupata or Lākula cannot be applied to them, though some of the sober elements of traditional Śaivism were preserved in them. The followers of the Spanda school “deny the necessity of God’s having a prompting cause such as Karman or a material cause like the Pradhāna for the creation of the world. Neither do they admit that he is himself the material cause, as the *Vedāntasūtras* maintain, nor do they think that some principle of illusion, such as Māyā, generates appearances which are false”.<sup>3</sup> God is according to them independent and creates merely by the force of his will all that comes into existence, as a yogin creates objects by his mere will without any materials. “He makes the world appear in himself, as if it were distinct from himself, though not so really, as houses or even towns appear in a mirror, and is as unaffected by it as the mirror is by the images reflected in it. Neither does he exist only

<sup>1</sup>Siddhantashastree, R.K., *Śaivism Through the Ages*, Ch. 8.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 184.



as realised in the world, which is the conclusion that follows from the doctrine that he is the material cause".<sup>1</sup>

In the Spandaśāstra individual soul is identical with the supreme soul, but the former does not perceive this identity on account of his impurity. "The impurity vanishes when by means of intense contemplation the vision of the highest being breaks in upon the mind of the devotee and absorbs all finite thought. When this condition becomes stable, the individual soul is free and becomes the supreme soul".<sup>2</sup>

There is great similarity between Pratyabhijñā Śaivism and Śākta monism, the former laying stress on Śiva and the latter on Śakti, though they are inseparable from each other according to both. Somānanda declares: "Śiva is never devoid of Śakti or divine power, and Śakti or divine power can never exist apart from Śiva. Śiva is endowed with divine power, and desires to create entities by His volition. Śaivism does not recognise difference between the Lord and His divine power".<sup>3</sup> Somānanda describes the five powers of Śiva—power of consciousness (*chit*), power of bliss (*ānanda*), power of volition (*ichchhā*), power of knowledge (*jñāna*) and power of action (*kriyā*). The last three powers exist in a very subtle state in Him, as non-different from Him. Kshemarāja defines Śivatattva as Parama Śiva of the nature of volition, knowledge and action and full of perfect delight. Śivatattva is the first vibration of Parama Śiva in His volition to create the universe.<sup>4</sup>

The Pratyabhijñā school may be best understood if we compare it with the Advaitism of Śaṅkara and Dualistic Śaivism of Śrīpati Paṇḍit and Śrīkaṇṭha. Somānanda differs from Śaṅkara on the following points: Śaṅkara regards Brahman as the ontological reality while according to Somānanda ontological reality is Śiva endowed with divine power (Śakti), Śiva and Śakti being inseparable from each other. Śaṅkara regards God (Īśvara), the phenomenal appearance of Brahman limited by nescience (*avidyā*), as the omniscient and omnipotent creator,

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 184 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>Sinha, Jadunath. *Schools of Śaivism*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 4, 8.

sustainer and destroyer of the world, while according to Somānanda Śiva is the omniscient and omnipotent creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world: He is not a phenomenal appearance. For Śaṅkara *māyā* is neither real, nor unreal, nor both, but indefinable, while for Somānanda, *māyā* is a real power of Śiva. For Śaṅkara, the world is a false appearance (*vivarta*) of Brahman due to *māyā*, while for Somānanda the world is real, created by Śiva by His power of volition and by His power of action though without the help of any extraneous material. Śaṅkara advocates absolute idealism while Somānanda advocates absolute ideal-realism or voluntarism (*svātantryavāda*). According to Śaṅkara the individual soul is an unreal appearance, a reflection of Brahman in *avidyā*, while for Somānanda the *Jīva* is real. Śiva limits Himself by His *māyāśakti* and becomes the *Jīva*. Consequently while for Śaṅkara the soul's bondage is due to its ignorance of its identity with Brahman, and its *moksha* is due to the destruction of this *avidyā*, for Somānanda bondage is due to the impurities and *avidyā* and *moksha* is obtained by their destruction.<sup>1</sup>

Pratyabhijñā Śaivism and Dualistic Śaivism both accept Śiva as the supreme, independent reality, and the world also as real. Both accept thirty-six categories (*tattvas*) and three impurities as real. "But the former is monistic while the latter is dualistic. The former regards Śiva as the ontological reality of the soul and the world, while the latter regards them as eternally distinct from Him. The Pāsupatas regard Śiva as the efficient cause and *Prakṛti* as the material cause of the world while Pratyabhijñā Śaivism regards Śiva as the efficient, material, and auxiliary cause of the world. Śrīkaṇṭha's Śaivism and Śrīpati Paṇḍita's Viraśaivism were influenced by Rāmānuja's qualified monism (*Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda*). Their views represent Śaiva Viśiṣṭādvaita. There are other differences also."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 75.

## Chapter 11

# Saktism (i)

### *Origin and Antiquity of the Worship of Mother Principle*

The worshippers of mother-goddesses conceive their deity as the personification of the primordial energy and the source of all divine as well as cosmic evolution. The term 'Śakti' represents female divinity in general and energising power of some divinity in particular.<sup>1</sup> Such a conception of the Mother-Goddess could originate only in a female-dominated society.<sup>2</sup>

It is held by scholars like Gordon Childe that most of the advances in the Neolithic 'civilization' such as invention of agriculture, pottery-making and domestication of animals were made by women. It was therefore natural that the mother, the most important aspect of womanhood, was compared with the Mother Earth in view of her possessing similar power of procreation. According to Starbuck "clan life in which the mother is the head of the group is likely to lift the Mother Goddess into a supreme position".<sup>3</sup>

"Besides this obvious empirical consideration, the speculative aspects also came to play, and the power of creation, preservation and destruction by gods was represented or conceived as the feminine principle, Śākti. It is this Śakti which makes God active and effective. This power in Indian and also in other societies was conceived as female."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kumar, Pushpendra, *Śakti Cult in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1974, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., 'Śāktism and Mother-Right', *The Śakti Cult and Tārā*, (SCT), ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 65-73. For the various views on the origin of Śāktism cf. Pushpendra Kumar, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup>ERE.

<sup>4</sup>Sinha, B.P., 'Evolution of Śakti Worship', SCT, pp. 45-55. Cf. Frazer, J.G., *The Golden Bough* (ab.), pp. 11-82; Briffault, R., *The Mothers*, 3 vols., London, 1952, III, p. 48 ff.; Bhattacharya, N.N., *The Indian Mother Goddess*, (IMG), New Delhi, 1977, Ch. I.



Though it is very difficult to say as to where the worship of the Mother Goddess originated, yet one may readily agree with Marshall that between the Indus and the Nile, the cult of the Mother Goddess was widely prevalent even in the prehistoric age. The evidence coming from the dim past, such as the so-called Venus of Willendorf, Menten, Lespungue and Lausell from Europe, have been traced to the Aurignacian period of the Stone Age.<sup>1</sup> Mallowan is, therefore, obviously right when he says that fertility cults related with the Mother Goddess must be the oldest and longest surviving ingredients of the religions of the ancient world.<sup>2</sup> According to Briffault also definite economic power was first placed in the hands of men by the domestication of animals, but where agriculture had developed on an important scale without any intervening pastoral stage, the matriarchal order became accentuated. That is why the identification of earth with woman pervades the thought of all stages of culture.<sup>3</sup>

### ✓ *Origin of Goddess Worship in India*

India is the land *par excellence* of Śāktism. The mother-principle, at first an abstraction creating an image in the sub-conscious, projected itself as a visual image emphasizing fertility in many ancient civilizations, but in India this idea touched and influenced almost all religions and sects, apart from its development in the form of a powerful independent sect. Whether its origin was Vedic and Aryan or non-Vedic and pre-Aryan has been a hotly debated question. Marshall suggests that, like the Mother Goddess of Western Asia, the pre-Aryan cult of the Indian Mother Goddess originated in a matriarchal stage of society.<sup>4</sup> His interpretation was inspired by R.P. Chanda who held that Śāktism arose in India under the same social conditions as those in which Astarte was conceived in Syria, Cybele in Asia Minor and Isis in Egypt,—that is in a society where mother right or mother-kin was current.<sup>5</sup> In this

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Viśva ki Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, *IMG*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>In ancient India also at the marriage ceremony the woman was called 'a seed field'. The word *kshetra* applies to women in all cases. Cf. Sinha, B.C., *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 123-24.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, J., *MIC*, I, London, 1931, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup>Chanda, R.P., *Indo-Aryan Races*, 1916, p. 150 ff.

connection Chanda points out to the survival of the custom of marrying the daughter of the maternal uncle in some parts of South India, to the reference to such a custom in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* and the *Tantravārttika* of Kumārila and to the *Mahābhārata* wherein it is stated that among the Arat̥tas and Vāhikas nephews inherit the property, instead of sons. According to the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* and the *Mahāvastu* also, the Śākyas used to marry their sisters. In the *Daśaratha Jātaka*, Sītā is represented as the sister as well as the wife of Rāma. In the conversation between Pāṇḍu and Kuntī we are informed that in earlier times women did not adhere to their husbands faithfully, and yet they were not considered sinful, for that was the sanctioned usage of the times. It was Śvetaketu, son of Uddālaka, who introduced the custom of patrilocal marriages.<sup>1</sup> It is but natural to expect that these matriarchal social groups attached special importance to the cult of the Mother Goddess.

Some light on this problem is thrown by a study of philosophical and religious ideas also. The Sāṃkhya philosophy identifies Purusha and Prakṛti respectively with the male and female principles, men and women. Just as the offspring is produced by the union of man and woman, so also this universe is produced by the union of Purusha and Prakṛti. But the same Sāṃkhya holds that Purusha is subordinate and nothing but a passive spectator; Prakṛti is all in all. In the Tantras also women are given the right of initiating persons as preceptresses in the matter of religious and spiritual activities. According to Bhattacharya the conception of Dakṣiṇāchāra, as opposed to Vāmāchāra, may be a latter development, and it is possible that the first word in the expression *vāmāchāra* is not vāma or left but vāmā or a woman.<sup>2</sup> R.G. Bhandarkar points out that the ambition of every pious follower of the Śākta system is "to become identical with Tripurasundarī, and one of his religious exercises is "to habituate himself to think that he is a woman. Thus the followers of the Śakti school justify their appellation by the belief that god is a woman, and it ought to be the aim of all to become a woman".<sup>3</sup> In the *Devībhāgavata P.* it is

<sup>1</sup>*Mbh.*, *Ādiparvan*, 122.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, *SCT*, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Bhandarkar, R.G., *VSMR*, Poona, 1933, p. 208.

stated that Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva were transformed into woman before they could see the Devī in her highest form. According to the Tantras, the Parā Śākti should be worshipped only by becoming a woman—*vāmā bhūtvā yajet Param.*<sup>1</sup> Kumārīpūjā to which the Tantras attach special importance derives its main impulse from mother-right. It also holds good for the Christian concept of the Virgin Mother. According to Bhattacharya the high position of woman, especially in the field of religion, was due to their traditional association with agricultural magic or religion, and all this can only be explained in terms of mother-right.<sup>2</sup>

### ✓ *Worship of Mother Principle in pre-Vedic India*

The study of Mother Goddess cult in prehistoric India is a difficult subject because of the lack of archaeological materials of the stone age cultures. Unlike the archaeological finds of palaeolithic Europe, the Indian palaeolithic sites have so far yielded no materials which could enlighten us on the Mother Goddess cult and practices in Stone Age India. In Chalcolithic Age of Indian history, however, the worship of the Mother principle was widely prevalent as is shown by the terracotta finds from Baluchistan where small agricultural communities existed even before the emergence of the Indus Civilization.<sup>3</sup>

It is, however, the Indus Civilization which gives us the earliest, positive and somewhat detailed evidence for the worship of the Mother Goddess in the form of numerous terracotta female figurines and representations on seals. The ring stones, the cylindrical stone pieces, are also symbolic proof of the existence of the Śākti worship in the Indus Civilization. We have studied its various aspects including the possibility that the Mother Goddess was regarded as the wife and sister both of the supreme god<sup>4</sup> in the first volume of the present work. Here we only wish to point out that the cult of the Mother Goddess is not common to all

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>Goyal, S.R., *RHAI*, I, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 24 f.; Cf. also Goyal, S.R., 'Yajurveda men Rudra kṛ Svarūpa aurā uskā Aitiḥāsika Mahatva' *Bhārati*, Bombay, VI11, ii, 1963, p. 130 ff.; 'Some Socio-Religious Aspects of the Indus Civilization', *Cultural Contours of India*, ed. by V.S. Srivastava, Jaipur, 1981, pp. 35-38.



the sites where the Harappan culture flourished.<sup>1</sup> For instance, at Lothal in Gujarat and Kalibangan in Rajasthan, the absence of the terracotta figurines of the Mother Goddess suggests that her cult did not receive recognition in those regions.

### *Goddesses in the Early Vedic Religion*

Goddesses occupy a subordinate position in the Vedic religion. No Somayāga was ever performed for them.<sup>2</sup> As wives of the great gods also, they play only an insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the gods with little independent power. Hardly anything about them is mentioned and their names are formed simply by adding the feminine *ani* to the names of gods (e.g. Indrāṇī, the 'wife of Indra'). In the subsequent religious history of India also Ṛgvedic goddesses have no significance. We do not find in the early Vedic literature the names of such Paurāṇika goddesses as Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā, Umā and others. It is only in the later Vedic texts that stray mention is made of these deities. As there is no reference to these goddesses in the *RV*, one may presume that originally they were tribal deities who were afterwards identified with the wife of Śiva-Paśupati. Some of the Ṛgvedic goddesses, however, survived in later Vedic literature with lesser or greater importance than they were given in the earlier texts.<sup>3</sup>

Among the goddesses known from the *RV*, mention may first be made of Ushā, Ilā, Sarasvatī, Aditi, Pṛthivī, Rākā, etc. In the *RV*, as many as twenty hymns are devoted to Ushā and she is mentioned more than 300 times. She has all the ingredients of becoming an all-creating, all-preserving and evil-destroying deity, but she was entirely a natural phenomenon with no clear and definite anthropomorphic features. Therefore, in later days she passed into oblivion. She does not figure in the subsequent religious history of India, and is practically unknown to the Epics and Purāṇas. Even in the *RV* the attitude of honour and respect to her is not always maintained. She receives no share in the

<sup>1</sup>Moti Chandra, 'Studies in the Cult of Mother Goddess in Ancient India', *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India*, No. 12, Bombay, 1973, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Macdonell, A.A., *Vedic Mythology*, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *IMG*, p. 100.

Somayāgas and in the *RV* IV. 30. 8-11, the poet admires the heroism of Indra in overcoming Ushā. According to D.D. Kosambi such legends suggest that a section of the Vedic Aryans were opposed to the cult of Ushā because it was probably borrowed from a pre-Vedic religion of the Mother Goddess. The same hymn which describes Indra's rape of Ushā also describes his success against the non-Vedic chiefs.

In the *RV* it is goddess Aditi who comes the nearest to the concept of an all powerful Mother Goddess. She is conceived as the Universal Mother, a mother-father, and son. She is whateyer has born and shall be born. Here we find the feminine principle definitely playing the supreme role. According to Max Müller Aditi is in reality the earliest word to express the infinite; not the infinite as a long process of abstract reasoning but the visible infinite, visible by naked eye, the endless expanse, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky. However some scholars take the word *aditi* primarily as a noun meaning 'non-binding', 'boundlessness,' etc. Roth, for example, understands the word to mean 'inviolability,' 'imperishableness,' and so on. But such epithets have nothing to do with her original conception because basically she was regarded as the mother of the gods. However, this great Mother Goddess also almost went into oblivion in the later ages; even in the Vedas she has not been separately assigned any prayer.

The Earth Goddess Pṛthivī is generally invoked with Dyaus, the sky-god. Individually she is lauded in one short hymn of the *RV*. In the *Atharvaveda*, however, she is given the highest esteem and is credited with great powers of creation, sustenance and ultimate destruction.

About twenty-one rivers are mentioned in the *RV*. Of these Sarasvatī was the first to be singled out as a goddess and was associated with Indra, Pūshan, the Maruts, the Aśvins and a host of divinities. In the Brāhmaṇa literature she is identified with Vāk (Speech) and in the post-Vedic mythology she became the goddess of eloquence and wisdom, a muse, and the wife of Brahmā. Sarasvatī is also associated with the sacrificial goddess Ilā or Idā and Bhāratī with whom she forms a triad. But she did not have the potentiality of becoming a powerful śakti.

Among other Vedic goddesses mention may be made of the Āpaḥ who are praised in four hymns of the *RV* as well as in a

few scattered passages as goddesses. As Mothers they give birth to Agni, one of whose forms is called 'Son of Waters'. Puramdhi, whose name occurs about nine times in the *RV*, is the goddess of plenty. Then there is Parendī, who is probably identical with the former, and Dhīshaṇā, mentioned nearly a dozen times. Ilā or Idā, the personification of nourishment, generally appears in the āpri sūktas in which she forms a triad with Sarasvatī and Mahī or Bhāratī. Bṛhaddivā is mentioned four times in the hymns to the Viśvadevas. Rākā is mentioned only twice in the *RV* as a goddess of plenty. Sinīvālī, mentioned in two hymns, is a sister of the gods and is invoked to grant offspring. Guṇḡ (Kuhū) is mentioned in name only. Then there are Pṛshnī, the mother of the Maruts; Sītā, the corn-mother; Śaraṇyu, the daughter of Tvashtṛ; Sūryā, the sun-maiden; Aranyānī, the forest mother; Lakshmī and Śrī; Śraddhā, an abstract deity symbolising respectfulness; Oshadhi, the herbal mother; Āpyā; Yoshā; Saramā, the dog-mother; Gandharvī; Alakshmī, the antithesis of Lakshmī; Asunīti and Nishtigr, symbolising abstract conceptions.

Although the idea of one supreme mother principle evolving the inner and outer world of thought and reality in conjunction with a male counterpart, either Śiva or Viṣṇu, is scarcely postulated in the early Vedic literature, it is nevertheless possible to trace the first origin of this tendency in the *RV* itself. Firstly, out of the various cosmic functions of the Ṛgvedic gods slowly emerges the notion of Śakti or Divine power, not surely conceived as a single category but in a pluralistic sense. "Thus, for instance, Agni is specifically described in the *RV* as having three functions; first, as heat-energy manifested not only in culinary or sacrificial fire, but also in his terrestrial operation as the energy of gastric fire, life and vegetative growth; second, in his operation in the atmosphere as the energy of lightning; and third, in his celestial operation as light and solar energy in the sun, the dawn and the different planetary bodies".<sup>1</sup> Secondly, in the notion of Śachī, a term which was commonly used in the Vedic literature for Śakti, we find, however crude and simple, the first faint glamour of the divine Śakti principle at the earliest stage of formation.<sup>2</sup> At one place, Śachī, the consort of Indra, is mentioned as the

<sup>1</sup>Sastri, G., 'The Cult of Śakti', *SCT*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.



Goddess of Might. Later, Śachī is conceived as nothing but Indra's deeds of power deified as his wife. The term Śakti itself is used nearly a dozen times in the *RV* and conveys the ideas of the powers of (i) generation and (ii) fertilization. "In the philosophical sense this idea of generation, meaning 'to give birth to the world of names and forms' played an important part in the post-Vedic connotation of Śakti as the 'female creative principle' fashioning the world out of her womb (*sarvaparpañchajanānī*)."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, there are the Rgvedic allusions to the Jñās, meaning women, occurring about seventeen or eighteen times. In the opinion of G. Sastri whereas the Rgvedic Śachīs represent divine powers as the deified nature of functions of the male gods forming an essential element in the constitution of the latter's personalities, the Jñās are distinctly separate principles of female energy acting in association with their male counterparts. In the Brāhmaṇas "all the different forms of Jñā divinities have been brought under the single head of Vāk who is regarded as the most typical representative of the Jñā type. The idea of Vāk as the Mantra-Mother, giving birth to her three-fold progeny of Ṛk, Sāman and Yajus is of great importance."

Some traces of the conception of Śakti can be found in the hymn addressed to Vāk in the Devīsūkta, and in the Rātri hymn. The Devīsūkta of the *RV* (X.125.1-8) portrays in an inimitable manner the idea of divine energy underlying every action of gods and men.<sup>2</sup> It is to this Sūkta that the beginnings of Śāktism is traditionally traced. Here Vāk, the daughter of the sage Ambhṛṇi, describes herself as presiding over speech like Logos in Greek mythology. She ascribes to herself the sole motivating power lying at the root of every effort in the world. "I hold aloft", she declares, "Varuṇa and Mitra, Indra and Agni and the pair of Aśvins. I cherish and sustain high dwelling Soma and Tvashtṛ. I support Pūshan and Bhaga. I bind the bow for Rudra so that his arrows may strike and slay the hater of devotion. I have penetrated the earth and heaven. . . I hold together all existence".<sup>3</sup> In the Rātri, sūkta of the *RV* also the concept of the divine energy as inherent in everything, in gods, men and animals, foreshadows the similar

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Chakravarty, A.K., 'The Devīsūkta of the *Rgveda* and its Speciality', *PJ*, IV, Pt. II, p. 599 f.

<sup>3</sup>See Agrawala, V.S., *Devī Mahātmya*, pp. 223-35.

concept detailed in the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in a hymn of the *AV* (VI. 38. 1-4) the goddess is described as mother of Indra and as the one who dwells in lion, in tiger, in fire, in Brahman, in the sun, in elephant, in leopard, in gold, in waters, in chariot, in dice etc. The *Devīsūkta* and the *Rātrisūkta* are read even today along with the *Devīmāhātmya* in the ceremonial recitations of the latter.

### *Śāktism in the Middle and Later Vedic Age*

From the above discussion it is obvious that though the philosophical bases of Śāktism may be traced in the early Vedic texts, yet the worship of Śakti did not and could not make any appreciable progress with any of the female deities of the Ṛgvedic age. According to J.N. Banerjea such goddesses as Ambikā, Umā, Durgā and Kālī, who individually or collectively came to be regarded as the main divinity of the Śakti cult make their appearance only tardily one by one in the later Vedic texts. Though the name of Rudrānī (the consort of Vedic Rudra) is to be found in some early Saṃhitā texts alongwith those of Indrānī, Agnayī and Varuṇānī (consorts of Indra, Agni and Varuṇa), these had no noticeable part to play in the growth and development of Śakti worship.<sup>2</sup> (Ambikā, one of the synonyms for the Paurāṇika Durgā, first appears in the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, of the *Śukla Yajurveda* as the sister of Rudra. (*Esha te Rudra bhāgaḥ saha svasra Ambikayā*—III. 57).<sup>3</sup> She is also given the same identity in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*. However, in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (X. 18) Rudra has been described as the husband of Ambikā (*Ambikāpati*). The association of the goddess with hills and mountains, especially in her Umā form, is very old and as noted below we find her first described as Umā Haimāvati (which later meant the daughter of the Himālaya mountains) in the *Kena Upanishad*.

We find the emergence of Durgā in the Brāhmaṇa period where she is connected with the sacrificial fire. Like Umā, who is also a daughter of Agni, Durgā is connected with Agni. In the *Muṇḍaka Upa.* (3.2.4) the seven tongues of Agni are said to be Kālī, Karālī,

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 236-38.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *PTR*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup>Goyal, *RHAI*, I, p. 27 f.

Manojavā, Sulohitā, Sudhūmravarṇā, Sphuliṅginī and Viśvaruchi. In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, the names of Durgī (a variant of Durgā) Vairochanī, Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī appear in the verses addressed to Agni.<sup>1</sup> The Durgāgāyatrī of this text reads *Kātyāyanāya (Kātyāyanai) vidmahe Kanyākumārīm dhīmahi tan no Durgīḥ prachodayāt* ['We think on Kātyāyana (Kātyāyanī) and meditate on Kanyākumārī; may Durgī advance us']. According to R.G. Bhandarkar Kātyāyanī probably denoted the special goddess worshipped by the sages of the Kātya gotra.<sup>2</sup> Kanyākumārī represents the virgin-daughter aspect of the goddess. The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, a work of the first century A.D. by some unknown Classical author, while describing a port of extreme southern India, states : "There is another place called Comari and a harbour . . . . It is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed'. According to J.N. Banerjea it is one of the earliest notices of a class of Śakti-worshippers from a foreign source.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is obvious that during the Middle Vedic period, there was a definite attempt of assimilating some pre-Aryan Mother Goddess forms. The various iconographic forms of the Mother Goddess, the references to their legs of wood or their dwelling in the caves, all point to the indebtedness of the cult of Śakti to the beliefs and practices of the non-Aryans or rather the non-Vedic or non-Brāhmaṇical people living in forests and hilly tracts of the country after having yielded the plains to the Aryans.

### *Goddesses in the Upanishads*

If we leave out the *Śvetāśvatara*, we find that in the principal Vedic Upanishads the word Śakti is not directly mentioned. Therefore, the ancient writers frequently quote from the *Śvetāśvatara*, but seldom from the *Brhadāraṇyaka* or *Mundaka*, etc., to prove the Vedic origin of Śāktism. However, in the *Nārāyaṇa Upanishad*, belonging to the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, we find a hymn in the form of a

<sup>1</sup>According to A.K. Chakraborty in the *RV* the hymn to Durgā appears in the 25th Khilasūkta and in the *Brhaddevatā* Śaunaka observes that the goddess Vāk in the form of Durgā wrote hymns dedicated to herself ('Rgvede Devī Pūjā', *Bhāratavarsha*, Calcutta, Year 51, Vol. I, No. 5, 1963, pp. 610-24, quoted in *PJ*, II, 2, p. 262).

<sup>2</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup>Banerjea, *op. cit.*



Gāyatrī addressed to the Divine Energy<sup>1</sup> wherein, as noted above, she has been described as Kanyākumārī and Durgī. In another sūkta of the same work she has been addressed as Durgā, and is described as a 'flaming goddess' associated with the Universal Self, and worshipped by the devotees for the sake of material gains here and hereafter and for liberation from the cycle of saṁsāra. In brief, she plays the part of Brahmadevī. In the *Kena Upanishad* (III. 12), we find mention of Umā Haimāvati, who appeared before the minor gods to enlighten them with the esoteric knowledge of the Supreme Being. In his commentary Śāṅkarāchārya actually identifies her with Brahmadevī.<sup>2</sup>

The names of Kālī and Karālī are first met with in the *Mundaka Upanishad* though here they denote two of the seven tongues of Agni. The number, seven, reminds one of the Saptamātṛkā concept (*infra*, p. 309 ff.). Bhavānī, a very popular name of the Devī in the Paurāṇika Śāktism is the female form of Bhava, the peaceful aspect of Rudra-Śiva while the name Rudrānī means the wife of Rudra, the terrific aspect of the god. Bhadrakālī is obviously the *saumya* form of Kālī, the terrific deity. These names occur in the *Śāṅkhayana-* and *Hiraṇyakeśi-Gṛhyasūtras*.

### Śāktism in the Epics

In the Epics the goddesses of the later Vedic literature become more prominent and those of early Vedic pantheon recede into the background. The early Vedic goddess Aditi is still the wife of Kaśyapa and the mother of the Ādityas, and of the gods. In the *HV* she is identified with Durgā, the Earth and even Devakī, the mother of Kṛṣṇa. She is described as jealous of her Vedic antithesis Diti, another wife of Kaśyapa and mother of the demons. Pṛthivī, often described as daughter of Pṛthu and as Virāj and addressed as the Great Mother, is imagined as a divine cow giving milk to her children. She provides wealth and is the bountiful producer of corn. She is conspicuously associated with Viṣṇu and is known by her epithet Vaishṇavī. However, so far as their associations and

<sup>1</sup>*TA*, 10.1, (quoted above, p. 290).

<sup>2</sup>Sharma, Vaidehi Sharan, 'Śakti Pūjā ke Mūla Srota', *Saptasindhu*, Patiala, XII, No. 6, 1965, p. 75 ff.; Goyal, S.R., 'The Origin of Śakti Cult', (in Hindi), *Purāṇkalpa*, Varanasi, 1974, IV, Pt. II.

functional aspects are concerned, in the Epics both Aditi and Pṛthivī are treated as minor divinities. Ushā is deprived of even this minimum recognition, for in the *Mbh.* she is merely a human being, daughter of Bāṇa and beloved of Aniruddha.

Later Vedic goddesses, however, receive greater importance in the Epics. Of the Vaishṇavite goddesses Śrī and Lakshmī, who play a significant part in the subsequent religious history of India, are usually identified with each other. We have discussed Śrī-Lakshmī in detail in Ch. 8 (pp. 223-30). Alakshmī, the antithesis of Lakshmī and the presiding goddess of all evils, finds mention in the *Mbh.* in connection with Kālī. Other abstract goddesses like Kīrti, Dhṛti, Medhā, Pushti, Śraddhā, Kriyā, Buddhi, Lajjā, Mati, etc., also find mention. Sometimes they are regarded as daughters of Daksha and wives of Dharma.<sup>1</sup>

Among the Later Vedic goddesses, without distinct sectarian affiliations, mentioned in the two Epics, one is Vāk identified with Sarasvatī, the supposed consort of Brahmā. This relation did not develop in the *Mbh.* in which she is as yet the daughter of Brahmā.<sup>2</sup> Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī is mentioned in the *Mbh.* as the daughter of the Sun and wife of Brahmā. She is often described as the Mother of the Vedas and identified with Umā or Durgā. Three minor Vedic goddesses, Rākā, Sinīvālī and Kuhū are mentioned in the *Mbh.* as moon-phases. Among other Vedic goddesses mentioned in the Epics are included Indrāṇī, also known as Śachī or Paulomī, wife of Indra; Rudrāṇī, wife of Rudra; Devī, wife of Varuṇa; and Nirṛti, the mother of death. The Vedic corn-mother Sītā has become humanized as the heroine of the *Rāmā*, but it is also stated that she rose in the field (for details vide Ch. 8, p.221). She is called corn-crowned (*dhānyamālīnī*). The *HV* mentions Sītāyajña or sacrifice in honour of Sītā offered exclusively by the ploughmen.<sup>3</sup>

Goddesses like Ambikā, Aparṇā, Bhadrakālī, Durgā, Gaurī, Kauśikī, Śākambharī, Umā, etc., were of Śaivite affiliation, but later they all became identified with the supreme goddess of the Śāktas. Umā, also known as Pārvatī, is the daughter of the Himālaya

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *The Indian Mother Goddess*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

and wife of Śiva. She is mentioned at many places in the two Epics with her epithets such as Giriputrī, Girirājaputrī, Śailarājaputrī, Nāgarājaputrī, Girīśā, Nāgakanyā, Parvatarājakanyā, etc., which indicate her association with the Himālayan region. The *HV* derives the name Umā from 'don't', as her mother Menā thus addressed her for being austere.<sup>1</sup> This name reminds one of Mā or the Mother and her conception goes back to the primitive and universal cult of the Mother Goddess. In the Kirātārjuna episode of the *Mbh.* Umā is described as a Kirāta woman. She is mentioned in connection with Skanda's birth and Jayadratha's Śiva worship and also as the presiding deity of the northern quarters. At some places she is mentioned along with Aditi, Hri, Śrī, Svāhā, Sarasvatī and others. She is mentioned also in the Dakṣa-Yajña episode and in the *Śiva-Umā Saṁvāda*. In the *Rāmā.* she is mentioned as the younger sister of Gaṅgā, born of Menā and the Himālaya. She granted a boon to the demons that their children would attain the age of their mothers immediately after their birth. The legend shows that Umā had a soft corner for the non-Vedic people, her original worshippers.<sup>2</sup>

However, on the whole *Rāmā.* does not contain any clear and definite evidence about the position of the Śakti cult. The story of Rāma's worship of the goddess Durgā for her help in his efforts to destroy Rāvaṇa as narrated in the *Devībhāgavata P.* and *Kālikā P.* and in the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttivāsa does not occur in the *Rāmā.* ascribed to Vālmīki. The two Durgāstotras in the *Mbh.*, one in the Virāṭaparvan (IV.6) recited by Yudhisṭhira and the other in the Bhīṣmaparvan (VI.23) recited by Arjuna on the advice of Kṛṣṇa, and the third one (Āryāstava) included in the *HV* (Vishṇuparvan, Chapter III), however throw welcome light on the position of the Śakti cult when these stutis were composed.<sup>3</sup>

The Āryāstava is a close knit structure. In the first three or four verses, stress is laid on the Aryan elements of the Goddess. She is addressed as Āryā, Nārāyaṇī, Tribhuvaneśvarī, Śrī, Rātri, Kātyāyaṇī, and Kauśikī. In the following verses however "her association with hills, particularly the Vindhyas, rivers, caves,

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 108.



forests and gardens, her connection with various domestic and wild animals, the fact of her being worshipped with great veneration by non-Aryan tribes like the Śābaras, the Barbaras and the Pulindas, are highlighted".<sup>1</sup> Then are given some of her various names and attributes including her daughtership of Nandagopa and sisterhood of Baladeva (she is Ekānamśā in this aspect), and her fondness of wine, meat, sacrifices etc., is mentioned. She is called Lakshmī and Alakshmī both, and also the personification of death, mother of the mantras and Gāyatrī of the gods.<sup>2</sup> She is said to pervade, the whole universe and is described as the saviour in all sorts of dangers. In the end the author prays that his mind, conception and heart may always remain concentrated on her.

In the first of the two Durgāstotras of the *Mbh.* Yudhishtira describes the goddess as the beloved of Nārāyaṇa, destroyer of Asuras, preserver of the three worlds and as residing in the Vindhya mountains. She is called Durgā, Kālī and Mahākālī. She loves wine, blood and meat. It may be noted that here Durgā is invoked as if she has nothing to do with Śiva. In the second stotra Arjuna describes some of these names and epithets and also praises her as Aryā, Kāpālī, Karālī, Bhadrakālī, Chāṇḍī, Kātyāyanī, Kauśikī, sister of Gopendra (Kṛṣṇa), Śakambharī, Brahmadiyā, Sāvitrī, Vedaśruti, Vedamātā, Skandamātā, fond of buffalo's blood etc.

As pointed out by Banerjea in this stava every sentiment is pure and sublime; there is not the least hint about the erotic-sensual character of her Tāntrika form. Here both Aryan and non-Aryan elements have contributed to the evolution of the her concept.<sup>3</sup> She is conceived both—as the deity of the ṛshis of the Kuśika and Kātya gotras and also of the Śābaras, Barbaras and Pulindas. The association of Durgā with Kṛṣṇa is also significant.

### *Śāktism in the Purāṇas*

From the point of view of literary history, broadly the age of Sūtras and the Epics was followed by the age of the Purāṇas. As we have seen earlier the Mahāpurāṇas, eighteen in number, were composed

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* Cf. also Kumar, Pushpendra, *Śakti Cult in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1974, p. 26 ff.

in their present form in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods while the Upapurāṇas, traditionally also regarded as eighteen, were composed later. Materials for the study of Śāktism is found more or less in almost all the Purāṇas, but the *Devībhāgavata*, the *Devīmāhātmya* (DM) Section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, the *Kālikā P.* and the *Lalitāsahasra* Section of the *Brahmāṇḍa P.* are more important for this purpose. The *Devībhāgavata* is included amongst the Mahā-purāṇas by the *Śiva*, the *Matsya*, and the *Kālikā Purāṇas* while the *Padma*, the *Nārada*, the *Skanda* and the *Kūrma Purāṇas* relegate it to the status of an Upapurāṇa, substituting the *Vaishṇava Bhāgavata P.* in its place.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Devīmāhātmya or the Durgāṣaptasatī*

The *Devīmāhātmya* or the *Durgāṣaptasatī*, which now exists as an independent scripture also, is a part of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* (Chapters 81-93) just as the *Gītā* is an independent work and also a part of the *Mbh.* In many other ways also it resembles the *Gītā*. In the *Gītā* there are 700 verses. In the current vulgate edition of the *DM* also, the text is stretched to 700 verses, counting among them stage directions like the *R̥shiruvācha*, *Rājorvācha*, *Mārkaṇḍeya uvācha*, etc. also. Hence its popular name *Saptaśatī*. Further, like the *Gītā* it is a work of rare beauty and synthesis. As pointed out by V.S. Agrawala,<sup>2</sup> it accepts the ancient Vedic tradition in the form of *Vāk* and *Trayī Vidyā* and the philosophical doctrine of the codified system of *Sāṃkhya* (*Prakṛti* manifesting as the three *guṇas*) and *Vedānta* as *Paramavidyā*, the cause of *Mukti*. The trend of the *Paurāṇika* thought is also fully reflected in it. Further, it synthesises the then prevailing numerous local Mother Goddess cults of both Aryan and non-Aryan origin of which a comprehensive list is found in the *Purāṇas* in the form of 108 *Devī Pīṭhas* (*infra*, p. 305 ff.). The *DM* itself mentions some of the *Devī* forms such as *Bhrāmārī*, *Śākambharī*, *Śatākshī*, *Bhīmādevī* etc. Its author synthesises the Śakti cult with *Vaishṇavism* and other sects also by his conception of the Goddess as the Supreme Power of Lord *Vishṇu* (*Vishṇumāyā*, *Nārāyaṇī*, *Vaishṇavī*, *Mahālakshmī* etc.) and as the embodiment of

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'The Evolution of the Śakti Cult in the post-Vedic Period', (in Hindi), *Purāṇkalpa*, Varanasi, 1974, IV, Pt. III, pp. 38-49.

<sup>2</sup>Agrawala, V.S., *Devī Māhātmya*, Varanasi, 1963, Preface, p. ix.

the collectivity of the Śaktis of the various Paurāṇika gods. For this he utilizes the doctrine of *avatāra* which is also expounded in the *Gītā*. Further he explains Devī as descending to the level of human manifestation in the form of Chetanā, Buddhi, Nidrā, Kshudā, Śakti, Tīṣṭhā, Śānti, Śraddhā, Kānti, Vṛtti, Smṛti, Dayā, Tusṭi, Mātr, and the all-pervading Vyāpti and Chiti. "Thus like a bejewelled casket inlaid with gems of all brilliant hues the Devī Māhātmya is a work of supreme poetic merit in which different rays of thought are faithfully reflected in a spirit of broad understanding".<sup>1</sup>

The determination of the age of the composition of the *DM* broadly depends upon the age of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* of which it is a part. Pargiter and V.S. Agrawala believe that the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* is a product of the Gupta age.<sup>2</sup> D.R. Bhandarkar<sup>3</sup> has shown that a verse from the *DM* is quoted in an inscription of 609 A.D. There are found used a number of Gupta motifs and conceptions in the *Mārkaṇḍeyā P.*—e.g. the conception of the Padminī Vidyā based on the idea of distribution of wealth among various classes, the Kūrma vibhāga division of the geography of India, the idea of the rain of gold, the description of the death of Mahishāsura while coming out in half-human form from the half-severed animal throat finding expression for the first time in the Mahishamardinī images of the Gupta age, the iconographic representation of the Sapta-mātrkās in the Gupta images exactly after their description in the *DM* and, above all, the spirit of religious toleration and synthesis evidenced by this work and the Gupta civilization both.<sup>4</sup>

The *DM* describes the Devīcharita in three parts : (1) Pūrva-charita which narrates the divine conflict against the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha; (2) Madhyamacharita which describes her battle against Mahishāsura, and (3) Uttaracharita in which her battle against Śumbha and Niśumbha, Chanda and Munda and Raktabīja are narrated. The story opens in the hermitage of a ṛshi named Medhā with the arrival of an extremely virtuous king named Suratha who had been defeated by his enemies in battle. Even in his

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. iv; Pargiter, *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Intro., p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup>*JBBRAS*, XXIII, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Agrawala, V.S., *op. cit.*, p. iv ff.; also see his *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa-Eka Saṁskṛtika Adhyayana*.



capital, which was lost to him, his ministers looted all his treasures and power. One day he met near the hermitage of Medhā a Vaiśya named Samādhi. The Vaiśya was also an extremely virtuous person and was born in rich a family, but his wealth was taken by his dishonest wife and son and he was driven out to the forest by his unfaithful friends. Being afflicted in their hearts both of them went to the sage and, like Arjuna of the *Gītā*, requested him to explain to them why did they feel affection towards those who had betrayed and deserted them. They were conscientious of right and wrong yet both of them appeared to be blind to their conscience. What was the cause of this ignorance and bewilderment? The sage explained to them: All lives are conscious, but that knowledge is connected with senses. That Goddess Bhagavatī, granting all kinds of prosperity, makes even the wise attracted to worldly pleasures and things forcibly with her great power of attraction. This ever-changing world with all its animate and inanimate beings, is created by her. As the cause of salvation she turns into supreme spiritual knowledge, and is thus eternal; and again as the cause of bondage to worldly things she turns into things mundane and is the mistress of all, including gods. She is eternal (and is thus beyond our knowledge) and pervades the world which may accordingly be called her form. Yet for the assistance of the lustrous souls, she appears in different forms. The sage, then, narrated to Suratha and Samādhi the holy wars that occurred between the Goddess Chāṇḍī and the great Asuras (giants) Madhu-Kaiṭabha, Mahishāsurā, Śumbha-Niśumbha etc., in the from of the three Charitas mentioned above.

In the *Pūrvacharitā* Brahmā faces the danger of losing his life at the hands of the two demon brothers, Madhu and Kaiṭabha even though he was sitting close to Viṣṇu, for the latter was lying in deep Yogic sleep under the influence of Devī in her Yoganidrā aspect. On Brahmā's earnest prayer to her (*Brahmā-stuti*) she took away her spell, and Viṣṇu saved Brahmā by killing the Asuras.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Madhyamacharita* Mahishāsurā, a mighty Asura, abjectly defeats the gods and, after driving them out of heaven,

<sup>1</sup>For a mystic interpretation of the this myth, vide H.C. Paul, 'Mystic Significance of the Madhu-Kaiṭabha Myth', *Aryan Path*, XXXV11, No. 5, 1966, pp. 210-5.

rules there in their place. The gods resort to Vishṇu and Śiva in their predicament who along with Brahmā, became very angry, and out of the accumulated anger and energy of these three and of all the other gods appeared a female covering the three worlds with her resplendence. The gods supplied her their respective weapons and she killed Mahishāsura and his retinue after a great fight. Relieved of their danger Indra and other gods recited a stuti in her praise (*Śakrādi-stuti*).

In the Uttamacharita the gods, again harassed by the two Asura brothers, Śumbha and Niśumbha resort to their protectress, the all-pervading goddess Vishṇumāyā, another aspect of the Devī with fulsome prayers and adoration (*Vishṇumāyā-stava*). She kills both the mighty demons along with Dhūmrālochana, Chaṇḍa, Muṇḍa, Raktabīja and their vast Asura army. Thereupon gods with Indra and Agni at their head recited the best of praise, (*Nārāyaṇī-stuti*) to propitiate her. In the last 14 verses of this section of the *DM* (Ch. XI, 41-54), Devī recites her various future manifestations in different ages for the purpose of destroying the evil-doers, and for sustaining the world. In the last verses of this canto she assures the gods and through them the world (as does Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*) that 'whenever (the world) will face such troubles through the appearance of the demons (evil and wicked persons), I shall incarnate myself and destroy the enemies' (cf. Ch. 3, p. 83).

A critical and analytical study of the four Devī-stutis mentioned above (Brahmā-stuti, Śakrādi-stuti, Vishṇumāyā-stava and Nārāyaṇī-stuti), specially the last one, helps us to know much about the nature of the Paurāṇika Śakti worship. In these stutis Devī tells the gods that born as the offspring of Yaśodā and dwelling in the Vindhyas she will destroy Śumbha and Niśumbha, two other brothers of these names; as Raktadantikā she will devour the demons of the Viprachitti lineage; as Śatākshī she will appear during the time of drought and as Śākambharī nourish the whole world; as Durgā she will kill the Asura Durgama; as Bhīmā she will destroy the Rākshasas on the Himavat and as Bhrāmārī she will slay the demon Aruṇa. These stutis are very skillfully interspersed in the *DM*. They contain, like the Durgāstotras of the *Mbh.* and the Āryāstava of the *HV*, references to her Vedic and non-Vedic strands, to her peaceful and terrific forms, to

her three aspects as mother, sister and daughter, to her saviour aspect, as well as to her several other features. The Nārāyaṇī-stuti, the most important of these hymns, speaks of her as Vaishṇaviśakti sustaining the whole universe, of her Mātṛkā forms and of her Lakshmi, Sarasvatī, Nārāyaṇī, Kātyāyaṇī, Durgā, Bhadrakālī, Ambikā and other manifestations.<sup>1</sup>

### *Paurāṇika Śaktivāda : Development of Philosophical Aspects*

The Paurāṇika Durgā-Pārvatī embodies the highest philosophical principles in her personality. She is omnipotent, a creator of heaven and earth and of the gods as well, the primeval energy (*ādyāśakti*) and the supreme deliverer. The verses of the *DM* (Chs. 81-93) which describe her as the creator of Brahmā-Vishṇu-Maheśvara and as the Mother and Queen of the three worlds, merely echo the Vedic Vāgambhṛṇī hymn where the Supreme Goddess is made to say 'I move with the Rudras, the Vasus. . . .' The Upanishadic Umā also provided the philosophical basis for the Śākta philosophers of the later ages, for though called Haimāvati she was actually as yet unconnected with the Himālayas and appears in this text more or less as the embodiment of Prakṛti. After the rise and development of the six philosophical systems abstract philosophical ideas, specially of Sāṃkhya and Vedānta, came to play even more significant role in moulding the Śākta theological concepts. The Sāṃkhya doctrine of the duality of Prakṛti and Puruṣa demanded corresponding theological duality. Śiva and Durgā were an answer to this. As Yogīśvara Śiva sits aloof and satisfies the followers of the Yoga system, together with his active wife or Śakti he becomes inactive Puruṣa and his wife the embodiment of the active Prakṛti principle. Thus Śiva and Śakti satisfy the religious demands at more than one level of consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

The Purāṇas, specially the Śākta and the Śaiva ones, discuss the philosophical significance of the Śakti principle at numerous places. They usually describe her either in the light of

<sup>1</sup>For a mystic and symbolic study of the *DM*, vide V.S. Agrawala, *Devī Mahātmya*, Varanasi, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Agrawala, V.S., 'The Glorification of the Great Goddess', *Purāṇa*, V, No. 1, 1963, pp. 68-89.



Sāṃkhya dualism or Advaitika monism or combine the two as two aspects of the same truth. In the DM of the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* Durgā is pure consciousness (*chiti*) (V. 78-80), the power of Śiva (XI. 14) and the Māyā of Viṣṇu (V. 14-16). She produces Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. She is Prakṛti, the creative energy, the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. She is devoid of guṇas but assumes them to create the world out of them (IV. 7). She is the nature (*Viśvātmikā*), the ground (*Viśvāśraya*) and ruler of the world (*Viśveśvarī*). She is cosmic nescience (*Mahāmāyā*), the all-pervading conscious power (*Vyāptidevī*) and the cosmic or highest knowledge (*Mahāvidyā* and *Paramavidyā*).<sup>1</sup> At one place in the DM Devī is invoked thus : "Thou art the cause of all the worlds. Though characterised by three qualities, even by Hari, Hara and other gods thou art incomprehensible. Thou art the resort of all; thou art the entire world which is composed of parts. Thou verily art the sublime original nature untransformed . . . . Thou art Medhā, O Goddess, thou hast comprehended the essence of all scriptures. Thou art Durgā, the boat to cross the ocean of existence, devoid of attachments. Thou art Śrī who has her dominion in the heart of the enemy of Kaiṭabha. Thou art indeed Gaurī who has fixed her dwelling in that of the moon-created god."

Almost the same ideas are echoed in the *Devībhāgavata P.*<sup>2</sup> In this work she is described as the Nirākāra and Nirguṇa Brahman and yet endowed with three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Her nature is real and unreal both. She becomes Mahālakṣmī in Sāttvikī power, Mahāsarasvatī in her Rājasikī power and Mahākālī in her Tāmasikī power.<sup>3</sup> She incites Brahmā to create, Viṣṇu to protect and Śiva to destroy. She is Ādyāśakti who transcends all guṇas though she is also the substratum of them. She is Prakṛti as well as Brahman. In this Purāṇa Vyāsa exclaims : "O Devī when Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, Varuṇa, Kubera, Yama and Agni were not, thou alone existed then . . . . O Mother, you hold all these visible Jivalokas in the cosmic Hiranyagarbha."

<sup>1</sup>Kumar, P., *Śakti Cult in Ancient India*, p. 47 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

The presiding deity of the *Devībhāgavata P.* is called Śrī Bhuvaneśvarī. She dwells in the Maṇidvīpa surrounded by all other gods and goddesses—all the Mahāvidyās, Pīṭhaśaktis, Kalās, and the various other groups of gods and goddesses.

The Śakti of the *Devībhāgavata* is Vaishṇavī and Śāṅkarī simultaneously. The *Devībhāgavata* also describes her cosmic form or Virāṭarūpa which she showed to the gods. In her Virāṭarūpa, Sattvaloka is situated on the top of her head, sun and moon are her eyes, the Vedas are her words, etc. All the gods fainted when they looked at that form (cf. the Viśvarūpa of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*)<sup>1</sup>.

The later or Paurāṇika Upanishads also describe the philosophical and popular aspect of Śakti. They lay great stress on Śakti as the creative power of Brahman. She is described as the mother of universe (*Tripura Upa.*). Several later Upanishads contain Tāntrika-Yaugika description of Mahātripurasundarī. The *Bhavarchopanishad* identifies her with a number of goddesses. The *Saubhāgyalakshmī Upa.* contains Tāntrika-Yaugika description of Mahālakshmī. Durgā is the subject of the *Tripuratāpanī Upa.* In the *Rāmatāpanī Upa.* Sītā as Śakti is identified with the Prakṛti of Rāma. The *Sumukhī Upa.* describes Śakti as a beautiful girl of sixteen seated on a corpse.<sup>2</sup>

*Lines of Growth and Development of Durgā-Pārvatī Concept : the Absorption of the non-Aryan Deities*

Devī—Durgā-Pārvatī—is a composite concept of the female principle, in which different ethnic and regional ideas, beliefs and practices, have combined in a manner which made it acceptable to both—the non-Aryan and the Aryan—strands of the Indian population. The role of the non-Aryan elements in the development of the conception of Devī has been delineated by R.C. Hazra<sup>3</sup> on the basis of Śākta Upapurāṇas and by J.N. Banerjea<sup>4</sup> with the help of the two Durgāstoras of the *Mbh.* (IV.6 and VI.22) and the Āryāstava of the *HV* (III.3). They have shown

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Date, V.H., *Brahma-Yoga of the Gītā*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 424 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Kumar, P., *Śakti Cult in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1974, pp. 20-23.

<sup>3</sup>Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, II, pp. 16-22.

<sup>4</sup>DHI, p. 491.

how Durgā-Pārvatī on the one hand represents the continuation, atleast on the philosophical plane, of the Vedic-Upanishadic tradition and, on the other, is an example of the evolution of the multi-dimensional personality of a goddess who by the use of the various devices (namely the theory of incarnation, the doctrine of vibhūti, the legend of the Śakti, Pīṭhas and the concept of the Matriganas etc.) absorbed the main traits of the innumerable regional goddesses of the Indian sub-continent most of whom were non-Aryan in origin.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the lofty philosophical ideas about Devī, which were mostly the development of the Vedic tradition, there was also a popular conception of her which was largely the result of the non-Aryan influences. In her Pārvatī form Devī is the daughter of the Himālaya and Menā. She is the wife of Śiva, the Supreme God, and mother of Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya etc. In her *saumya* or benign form she is the embodiment of motherhood and ideal of satī. But in her fierce or terrible (*ugra*) aspect she is the destroyer of the asuras such as Durgam, Mahisha, Madhu, Kaiṭabha, Śumbha, Niśumbha and a host of others. In the Durgāstotras of the *Mbh.* and the *DM* emphasis is laid on her character as a fighting or war-goddess. In expressions like Kālī, Karālī, Mahākālī, Kāpālī, Kapilā, Kṛṣṇapīṅgalā, Aṣṭaśūla-praharaṇā, Khaḍga-kheṭaka-dhārīṇī, Vijayā, Jayā, Aṭṭahāsā, Kālāmukhī, Raṇapriyā, etc., her destructive as well as fighting roles are manifested.

The non-Aryan elements in the personality of Durgā-Pārvatī are too patent to be ignored. In the Durgāstotra of the Bhīṣmaparvan she has been mentioned as a dweller in great forests, frightful places and unapproachable countries, while in the other stotra, found in the Virāṭaparvan, she has been described as living in the Vindhya mountains. This association of Devī with the Vindhyas has further been emphasised in the *HV* (II.22.52-55) where she is described as the one who killed Śumbha and Niśumbha who roamed in the Vindhya mountains. She is also described as anointed by the ghosts and worshipped by bands of robbers, and as decorated with jars full of wine and meat. The Āryāstava (*HV* II.3.6-9) also describes her as Vindhyavāsīnī,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Swami, Narahari, 'Durgā aura Durgā Pūjā kā Māhātmya,' *Tripathagā*, XI, No. i, Oct. 1965, p. 17 f.; Sarkar, Amal, 'The Symbolism of Durgā Image and Durgā Pūjā', *Modern Review*, C XIV, No. 5, 1963, p. 360 ff.



crowded by cocks, goats, sheep, lions and tigers, worshipped by the Śābaras, Barbaras and Pulindas and as having peacock-tail as a mark. The identity of this goddess with the one referred to in the Durgā-stotras is proved by their common association with forests, mountains and beasts, by their common connection with peacock-tail and also from the reference to wine and meat as favoured by Devī in both the texts. Again, in the Purāṇas, we find that Kālī in the Kālāñjara mountain, Chaṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsini in the Vindhya mountains are mentioned as the different manifestations of the Devī and her particular liking for wine and meat has also been referred to.<sup>1</sup>

As pointed out by A.K. Bhattacharya, the evidence of the Purāṇas on this point is supported by secular literature. Bāṇa in his *Kādambarī* has mentioned that the Śābaras considered offering of *narabali* to their goddess as a meritorious act and that they offered animals to their deity. In the *Harshacharita*, too, he refers to the performance of animal sacrifice for her. In the *Gauḍavaho* (first half of the 8th century A.D.) King Yaśovarman offers a hymn of fifty-two couplets to the goddess Vindhyavāsini in which fearful atmosphere of her temple and its surroundings, the slaying of the buffalo-demon by her and her association with the peacocks are mentioned. The *Gauḍavaho* also mentions that human sacrifice was offered daily to the goddess of the Śābaras who lived in a cave of the Vindhyas. From the *Kathāsaritsāgara* also it appears that the wild hill tribes of the Vindhya range, indiscriminately called Śābara, Pulinda, Bhīla etc., offered human sacrifice to their supreme deity.<sup>2</sup>

As early as the *Mbh.* Durgā is called Kālī and Mahākālī just as Śiva, the destroyer, is Kāla or Mahākāla. Philosophically in this aspect she is the personification of Kāla, the all-destroying Time and is fierce because she embodies the principle of destruction. But as pointed out by S. Bhattacharji this image is the product of at least two factors—on the popular plane she is the dreaded (*ugra*) aspect of Durgā, the familiar deadly goddess of the primitive people, who sends gruesome plagues, diseases, pain, torture, misery, fear and death, and on the conceptual plane she is the elevated

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, A.K., 'A Non-Aryan Aspect of the Devi', *SCT*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 58 f.; Bhattacharji, S., *The Indian Theogony*, p. 173.

idea of change concomitant with time, mutability and ineluctable fate.<sup>1</sup> Durgā is conceived as many armed, a feature which is totally absent in the conception of Pārvatī-Umā. It is in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Vāmana Purāṇas*, and also in other Devī-oriented Purāṇas that we have her terrible demon-slayer form represented by Chaṇḍikā or Kauśikī, further developed as Kālī. The goddess Kauśikī was probably associated with the people of the Kuśika gotra and later came to be identified with Chaṇḍikā. According to the *DM* Kauśikī emerged from the *kośa* of Pārvatī due to which the latter turned black and became known as Kālīkā dwelling in the Himālayas. Elsewhere in the same text, Kālī emerges from the forehead of Chaṇḍikā with the purpose of killing the demons Chaṇḍa and Muṇḍa, and after having accomplished the task she receives the epithet Chāmuṇḍā. As the word Chāmuṇḍā cannot be derived from Chaṇḍa-Muṇḍa it must be held that Chāmuṇḍā and Kālī were originally different goddesses. Kauśikī, Chaṇḍikā, Kālī, etc. were evidently adopted in the Śākta pantheon from the surviving tribal divinities. As noted above, Kālī in Kālañjara, Chaṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsini in the Vindhyas are mentioned in the *Matsya P.* as the manifestations of the supreme goddess. Aparṇā, a name by which Kālī is sometimes identified, signifies a deity 'without her leaf cloth'. This naked goddess must have originally been worshipped by such a tribe as the Nagna-Śabarās (the naked-Śabarās) of the *Bṛhatsamhitā*<sup>2</sup>. Mythologically her most important aspect is that of Mahishāsura-mardinī, the myth of which forms the main topic of the *DM*. This form of the goddess has been specially popular from the Kushāṇa and early Gupta periods onwards. One of its earliest representations is found on the facade of a cave at Udayagiri (M.P.).

#### *Incarnations, Vibhūtis and other Manifestations*

Like Vaiṣṇavism Śāktism also adopted a number of devices to strengthen its syncretistic approach. One of these devices was the theory of incarnation which is propounded in the *DM* and *Devībhāgavata P.* almost in the words of the *Gītā*. The *Skanda P.* also describes the various incarnations of Devī including those in

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *IMG*, p. 121.

the form of Pārvatī or Umā, Viśvabhujā, Śrīmātā, Mātāṅgī, Bhūtamātā, Subhadrā, Durgā, Kātyāyanī, Chāmuṇḍā, Satī, and a host of others.<sup>1</sup> In some texts such as the *Devī P.* the manifestations of Devī are divided under Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika groups.<sup>2</sup> The most important incarnations of Devī are called the Nava Durgās. Various lists of them are given in different texts. The *Bhavishya P.* names them as follows : Mahālakshmī, Nandā, Kshemaṅkarī, Śivadūtī, Mahātūṇḍā, Bhrāmārī, Sarvamaṅgalā, Revatī and Harasiddhi. Devī has eight other forms corresponding to the eight forms of Śiva. They are : Maṅgalā, Vimalā, Sarvamaṅgalā, Alambā, Kālarātri, Marīchikā, Chaṇḍarūpā and Rudrāṇī. Then there are ten Mahāvidyās, viz. Kālī, Tārā, Chhinnamastā, Śrīvidyā, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Bagalā, Dhūmrā, Tripurasundarī and Mātāṅgī. The yoginīs sometimes represented as sorceresses and sometimes as Kuladevatās, are usually described as 64 in number.<sup>3</sup> The concept of the Mātṛgaṇas has been discussed below.

As in the *Bhagavadgītā*, so in the *DM* there is a description of the vibhūtis of the deity. When the demon-king accuses Devī of fighting with the help of other goddesses, Devī replies : "I am all alone in the world. All these goddesses are but my own vibhūtis. These are projected by me and are also withdrawn by myself whenever it is necessary" (IX. 6)<sup>4</sup>.

### *The Śakti Pīṭhas*

An idea of the popularity of the Śakti cult may be formed from the evidence of the Epics, Purāṇas and other texts regarding the holy places connected with Devī<sup>5</sup>. The Tīrthayātra Section of the Vanaparvan of the *Mbh.* refers at least to three holy places associated with the *Yonī* (sexual organ) and *stanas* (breasts) of

<sup>1</sup>Kumar, P., *op. cit.*, P. 228 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Paul, H.C., 'An Approach to the Mystic Philosophy of Caṇḍī', *Professor Surya Kumar Bhuyan Commemoration Volume*, Gauhati, 1966, pp. 238-47.

For the concept of Vibhūtis in the *Gītā*, vide Date, *op. cit.*, p. 390 ff.

<sup>5</sup>For details vide *IMG*, p. 236 ff.



Devī. It also speaks of Pushkara, Kurukshetra and Śākambharī-tīrtha as Devītīrthas. The *Hevajratāntra* of the Buddhists enumerates the following four holy regions as pīṭhas of the goddess : (i) Jālandhara, (ii) Oḍḍiyāna, (iii) Pūrṇagiri and (iv) Kāmarūpa. Other Buddhist works, such as the *Sādhnamālā* give the four names as Oḍḍiyāna or Uḍḍiyāna, Pūrṇagiri, Kāmarūpa or Kāmākhyā and Śrīhaṭṭa or Sirīhaṭṭa. The *Rudrayāmala* (c. tenth century A.D.) mentions ten holy places associated with Śākta-Tāntrika practices. Besides the above four these include (v) Vārāṇasī, (vi) Javalantī (Jvālāmukhī of later texts), (vii) Māyāvātī (near Hardwar), (viii) Madhupurī (Mathurā), (ix) Ayodhyā and (x) Kāñchī (Kāñchīpuram). The number increases to eighteen in the *Kulārṇava*. The *Jñānārṇavatāntra* has two lists—one containing eight names and the other fifty.

The *Kubjikātāntra* enumerates the following forty-two centres of the Śakti cult : Māyāvātī, Madhupurī, Kāśī, Gorakshakāriṇī, Hīṅgulā, Jālandhara, Jvālāmukhī, Nagarasambhava, Rāmagiri, Godāvarī, Nepāla, Karṇasūtra, Mahākarnā, Ayodhyā, Kurukshetra, Sīmhalā, Maṇipura, Hṛshikeśa, Prayāga, Badari, Ambikā, Vardhamāna or Ardhanālaka, Triveṇī, Gaṅgāsāgara-saṅgama, Nārikela, Virajā,<sup>1</sup> Uḍḍiyāna, Kamalā, Vimalā, Mahishmatī, Vārāhī Tripurā, Vāgmatī, Nīlavāhinī, Govardhana, Vindhyagiri, Kāmarūpa, Ghaṇṭākarnā, Hayagrīva, Mādhava, Kshīrāgrāma and Vaidyanātha. A few of these sites have been mentioned above and some others are well-known places of Hindu pilgrimage.

The Purāṇas, especially the later ones, are more elaborate on this point. The *Matsya* and other Purāṇas enumerate the following 108 names of Devī and of the Pīṭhas sacred to each of them (though there are some variations in the different list) : Viśālākshī (in Vārāṇasī, U.P.); Liṅgadāriṇī (in Naimisha, modern Nimkhar or Nimsar in the Sitapur district, U.P.); Lalitā (in Prayāga, U.P.); Kāmākshī; Kāmukā or Kāmukī (in Gandhamādāna, a Himālayan peak at Badari); Kumudā (in Mānasa, the source of the Sutlej in the Himālayas); Viśvakāyā or Viśvakāmā (in Ambara, modern Amer in Rajasthan); Gomatī (in Gomanta, i.e. Goa region); Kāmachāriṇī (in Mandar, the Mandara hill in Bhagalpur district, Bihar); Madotkaṭā (in Chaitraratha, location uncertain); Jayantī

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Phal, U.N., 'Virajā-Kṣetra—A Śakta Pīṭha,' *Aruna Bhārati*, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, pp. 67-76.

(in Hastinapur, U.P.); Gaurī (in Kānyakubja, U.P.); Rambhā (in Malaya mountain); Kīrtimātī (in Ekāmra, modern Bhubaneswar, Orissa); Viśvā or Vilvā (in Viśveśvara, location uncertain); Puruhutā (in Pushkara, Rajasthan); Mārgadāyini (in Kedāra, in the Himālayas); Nandā or Mandā (in the Himālayas); Bhadrakarnikā or Bhadrakālikā (in Gokarna, modern Gendia near Goa); Bhavānī (in Sthāneśvara, modern Thanesar); Vilvapatrikā (in Vilvakā, mythical); Mahādevī (in Śrīśaila, in Karnool district, Andhra Pradesh); Bhadrā or Bhadreśvarī (in Bhadreśvara, in Hooghly district, West Bengal); Jayā (in Varāhaśaila, either Baramula in Kashmir or Barachatra in Nepal); Kamalā (in Kamalālaya, mythical); Rudrānī or Kalyānī (in Rudrakoṭi, either the tīrtha of this name in Kurukshetra, or that near the source of Narmadā); Kālī (in Kālāñjara, Banda district, U.P.); Kapilā (in Mahaliṅga, mythical); Mukteśvarī or Maṅgaleśvarī (in Koṭa, possibly Koṭatīrtha at Kālāñjara); Mahādevī (in Śālagrāma, at the source of the river Gaṇḍakī or Gandak); Jalapriyā (in Śivaliṅga, mythical); Kumārī (in Māyāpurī, in the Hardwar region); Lalitā, (in Santāna, mythical); Utpalā (in Sahasrāksha, mythical); Mahotpalā (in Hiranyāksha, mythical); Maṅgalā (in Gayā); Vimalā (in Purusottama, Puri in Orissa); Amoghākshī (in Vipāśā, modern Beas, a tributary of the Indus); Pāṭalā (in Puṇḍravardhana, modern Mahasthan in Bogra district, Bangladesh); Nārāyaṇī (in Supārśva, mythical); Bhadrasundarī or Rudrasundarī (in Trikūṭa, the mythical peak of Ceylon or Trikūṭa in northern Konkan or a hill of the same name in Deogarh); Vipulā (in Vipulā, mythical); Kalyānī (in Malayāchala, southern part of the Western Ghats); Koṭavī (in Koṭitīrtha, location uncertain); Sugandhā (in Mādhavavana, probably the same as Madhuvana or Mathurā); Trisandhyā (on the Godāvarī); Ratipriyā (in Gaṅgādvāra, same as Hardwar); Śivanandā (in Śivakuṇḍa, mythical); Nandinī (on the Devikā, modern Deeg in Punjab); Rukmiṇī (in Dvārāvati, modern Dwarka, Kathiawar); Rādhā (in Vṇḍāvana); Devakī (in Mathurā); Paramēśvarī (in Pātāla, mythical); Sītā (in Chitrakūṭa, in Bundelkhand or less probably Chittor); Vindhyavāsinī (in the Vindhyas); Ekavīrā (on the Sahyādri or the Western Ghats); Chandrikā (in Hariśchandra, mythical); Ramaṇā (in Rāmatīrtha, Thana district, Maharashtra or Rāmagiri, modern Ramtek near Nagpur); Mṛgāvatī (on the Yamunā); Mahālakshmī (in Karavīra, Kolhapur in Maharashtra); Umā (in Vināyaka, one of the eight

Vināyaka tīrthas in Maharashtra); Ārogā (in Vaidyanātha, Deogarh-Vaidyanatham in Bihar); Māheśvarī (in Mahākāla, probably Ujjain); Abhayā (in the Ushṇa or Pushpatīrtha, possibly connected with Pushpagiri in the Malaya range); Amṛtā (in the Vindhyan cave); Māṇḍavī (in Maṇḍavya, modern Mandor in Rajasthan); Svāhā (in Maheśvarapura, modern Maheśvara in M.P.); Prachandā (in Chāgalāṇḍa, mythical); Chāṇḍikā (in Amarakaṇṭaka, M.P.); Varārohā (in Someśvara, possibly Somnath in Kathiawar); Pushakarāvati (in Prabhāsa, same as Somnath); Devamātā (on the Sarasvatī); Mātā (on the bank of the Pārā); Mahābhāgā (in Mahālaya, same as Omkāreśvara, or Amareśvara); Piṅgaleśvarī (on the Payoshnī, the river Paisuni, tributary of Yamunā); Simhikā (in Kitāśaucha, mythical); Yaśaskarī (in Kārttikeya, possibly modern Baijnath, Kumaon district, U.P.); Lolā (in Utpalāvartaka, in Tinnevely district or Utpalāvata, modern Bithoor, U.P.); Subhadrā (on the confluence of the Son and the Gaṅgā near Patna); Mātā Lakshmī (in Siddhapur either Siddhaur near Barabanki or Sidpur about sixty-four miles from Ahmedabad); Aṅganā (in Bharatāśrama, mythical); Viśvamukhī (in Jālandhara, in the Punjab); Tārā (on the Kishkindhyā hill, in Andhra Pradesh, or modern Kekind in Jodhpur); Pushti (in Devadāruvana, in the Himālayas or modern Aundh in the Deccan); Medhā (in Kashmira); Bhimā (on the Himālayas); Pushti or Tushti (in Vastreśvara, possibly the same as Vastrāpatha or Girnar in Kathiawar); Śuddhi (in Kapālamochana, identification uncertain); Mātā (in Kāyāvarohaṇa, Karvan in Borada); Dhvani (in Śaṅkhoddhāra, the island of Bate or Beyt in the Gulf of Kutch); Dhṛti (in Piṇḍāraka, near Dwarkā); Kalā (on the Chandrabhāgā, or Chenab); Śivakāriṇī (in Achchhoda, modern Achchhavat in Kashmir); Amṛtā (on the Beṇā, a tributary of the Kṛshṇā); Urvaśī (in Badari, Badrinath U.P.); Oshadhi (in Uttarakuru, mythical); Kuśodakā (in Kuśadvīpa, one of the seven mythical dvīpas); Manmathā (in Hemakūṭa, somewhere in the Himālayas); Satyavādinī (in Mukuṭa, mythical); Vandanīya (in Aśvattha, mythical); Nidhi (in the home of Vaiśravaṇa, imaginary); Gāyatrī (in Grammar, imaginary); Pārvati (in the company of Śiva, imaginary); Indrāṇī (in the world of gods, imaginary); Prabhā (in solar orb, imaginary); Vaishṇavī (among Divine Mothers, imaginary); Arundhati (Among chaste women, imaginary); Tilottamā (among beautiful girls, imaginary); Brahmakalā (in the hearts of



men, imaginary) and Śakti (in the living beings, imaginary).

The names of some of the presiding deities of the various Pīṭhas are mythical but many of these deities were obviously local goddesses. Later on, the Purāṇas invented the story of the death of Satī, wife of Śiva and the falling of her limbs in different places to bring all these goddesses within the orbit of one cult. The *Mbh.* and the earlier Purāṇas make no mention of Satī's death. The later Purāṇas however relate that Dakṣha, the father of Satī, did not invite Śiva to his sacrifice, and this humiliation led her to destroy her body. At this Śiva became so inconsolable that he took her dead body on his shoulders and travelled aimlessly. In order to save him from this madness, Viṣṇu cut off the dead body of Satī piece by piece. Parts of her body thus fell at different places which came to be known as Śakti Pīṭhas. It is also said that the deep love of Śiva for his wife made him to keep guard over her remains in all these places, that is shrines of Śiva were built not far from those of Śakti. The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang refers to the worship of the goddess Bhīmādevī, the spouse of Maheśvara, in her natural likeness. According to J.N. Banerjea it probably alludes to the aniconic form of the object of worship representing the various limbs. It also indicates that the Pīṭhapūjā concept was already much in vogue in the middle of the seventh century.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Concept of Mātṛgaṇas*

Another device by which a number of goddesses were brought within the fold of one sect was the concept of the Mātṛgaṇas or Divine Mothers. In the historic period the number of the divine mothers is often given as eight, nine or sixteen, but originally they appear to have been counted as seven (Saptamātṛkā), their names being usually associated with the gods of the Hindu pantheon. They are Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Chāmuṇḍī. In the *Devīmāhātmya* account of the fight of the Devī with the asuras the number of the Mātṛkās is given as 9, by the addition of two names Śivadūtī and Nārasimhī.<sup>2</sup> In some later texts

<sup>1</sup>Various texts of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* have been edited by D.C. Sircar in his *Śākta Pīṭhas* in which the names of the Pīṭhas, Pīṭha devatās (forms of the goddess), Kṣhetrādhiṣṭas (Bhairavas) and Devī's *aṅgaḥpratyāṅgas* (limbs including ornaments, etc.) have been arranged in tabular form, and the discrepancies occurring in the various sources are indicated.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 125.

the number rises to 16 with Gaurī in the beginning (*Gauryādisho-ḍaśa-mātrkā*).

In the *Mbh.* we come across numerous Mātrkāś associated with Skanda. They had access in Jainism and other religious systems also. In the Purāṇas they are regarded as the offshoots of the goddess Kauśikī or Chaṇḍikā. Some of them like Vaishṇavī, Kālīkā, etc., are often identified with Devī herself.

There are different versions of the origin of the Mātrkāś in the Purāṇas. According to one myth when Śiva's spear pierced the heart of the demon Andhaka, each drop of the latter's blood created a demon. This made Śiva highly angry and from his body emerged the goddess Yogeśvarī, and at the same time Vaishṇavī, Brahmāṇī, Kaumārī, Indrāṇī, Māheśvarī, Chamuṇḍā and Vārāhī emanated from the bodies of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Kumāra, Indra, Maheśvara, Yama and Varāha respectively. They drank and drained all the blood that fell from Andhaka's body. According to another myth when Śumbha sent Raktabīja to fight against Devī, the latter uttered a fearful war-cry and Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Vaishṇavī, Kaumārī, Vārāhī and Nārasimhī emerged out of her mouth. The seventh, namely Chāmuṇḍā, had already emerged from Devī's body when the latter was engaged in war with Ruru, a general of Śumbha. Each drop of blood that fell from the body of Raktabīja was drunk by Chāmuṇḍā alone. The *Varāha P.* says that Yogeśvarī is the symbol of lust, Māheśvarī of anger, Vaishṇavī of greed, Kaumārī of attachment, Brahmāṇī of pride, Aindrī of jealousy, Chāmuṇḍā of depravity and Vārāhī of envy.

The iconographic features of the various Mātrkāś resemble those of the gods they represent. Brahmāṇī is four-armed and four-headed, has swan as her vāhana and bears a rosary and a waterpot from which she sprinkles water with kuśa. Māheśvarī is seated on a bull and wears a jaṭāmukuṭa and a crescent. Kaumārī is red-coloured and four-armed, carries a śakti and is seated on a mayūra (peacock). Vaishṇavī resembles Viṣṇu and Vārāhī a boar. The vehicle of the latter is the buffalo and she is armed with a club and a wheel. Indrāṇī or Aindrī is many-eyed, golden-coloured and carries a thunderbolt, a spear and a club, her vāhana being the elephant. Chāmuṇḍā is three-eyed, fleshless and bony, is clad in tiger-skin and is seated on a corpse.

The worship of the divine mothers was very intimately

associated with the Tāntrika form of Śakti worship. The Gangdhar inscription of 423 A.D. speaks of a worshipper of Viṣṇu building a temple full of Dākinīs in honour of the Divine Mothers 'who utter tremendous shouts in joy and stir up the oceans, with the mighty wind rising from the magic rites of their religion.' The Bihar stone pillar record<sup>1</sup> of Skandagupta mentions the Divine Mothers and a Deogarh inscription of about the sixth century A.D. refers to an early temple of the Divine Mothers. The Mātṛgaṇa or 'the group of the Divine Mothers' is mentioned in the records of the early Kadamba kings who claimed to have been favoured by the god Mahāsenā (Skanda-Kārttikeya) and the Divine Mothers. The early Chālukyas of Bādāmī are also stated to have been nourished by the Seven Mothers described as Saptalokamātr, meaning 'the Seven Mothers of mankind', or 'the Mothers of the Seven Worlds.' Apparently the same Mātṛmaṇḍala is referred to in the passage *Matṛṇām loka-matṛṇām maṇḍalam* occurring in a sixth century inscription from Udayagiri (Jhansi District, U.P.) recording the construction and consecration of a temple of the Divine Mothers.

The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (LX. 19) of Varāhamihira also refers to the worship of the Divine Mothers by the Maṭṛ-maṇḍalavidāḥ or maṇḍala-krama-vidāḥ. The first of the two variant readings means 'those who know fully the circle of the Divine Mothers', while, the other reading means 'those who know fully the traditional rules of worship.' In all these cases the reference seems to be to the collective worship of these divinities.

<sup>1</sup>Sircar, in *SCT*, p. 88.



## Chapter 12

# Saktism (ii)

### *Śakti Principle in Śaivism*

Śaktivāda made its greatest impact on and had the most intimate alliance with Śaivism because Śakti and Śiva are generally looked upon as either identical with or complementary of each other.<sup>1</sup> We have already seen how from the religious and philosophical points of view Śakti worship is an integral part of Śaivism. Philosophically, the various schools of Śaivism have different theories of the Śiva-Śakti relationship. Vīraśaivism, for example, envisages an integral association between Śiva and Śakti, known as Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitavāda. Kashmir Śaivism, on the other hand, based its doctrines on the Vedānta philosophy which emphasizes that māyā is the Śakti of Brahman (Śiva). This Śakti, mainly divided into five categories—*chit* (the power of intelligence), *ānanda* (the power of bliss), *ichchhā* (the power of will), *jñāna* (the power of knowledge) and *kriyā* (the power of action)—is the feminine aspect of Śiva. With the opening out of Śakti the universe originates, and with her closing, it dissolves. A section of Kaśmīra Śaivas however developed the theory of Śaktyadvayavāda according to which Śakti is not different from Śiva and the material world is the *pariṇāma* or consequence of Śakti. As we have already seen, Somānanda criticized this view for its emphasis on Śakti as the only substance (p. 277 ff.).

The Śaiva-Siddhāntins look upon Śiva as the operative cause and Śakti (māyā) as the material cause of the world. On the basis of the *satkāryavāda* of Sāṃkhya they believe that the material world must have a material cause, and the constituents of this cause cannot be qualitatively different from those of the effect.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. CA, p. 446.

### *The Ardhanārīśvara Concept*

Śiva and Pārvatī cults drew closer to each other until their merger is symbolically represented by the Ardhanārīśvara concept in which the two deities form two halves of one body. On the philosophical plane this is a creative union of the active and passive principles. The Ardhanārīśvara aspect of Śiva is described in the Anuśāsana-parvan of the *Mbh.* (XIII.14.298-313). In Yama and Yamī of the *RV* we have a primeval bisexual pair. There are many other pairs of bisexual character, and usually they are regarded as creator divinities. Therefore, as pointed out by S. Bhattacharji, for Śiva and Pārvatī this was a step towards their rise to the rank of the primordial pair and also to that of prime creators. As in mythology Śiva was assigned the specific task of destruction, "his stature would be merely negative if he was not shown to be the creator as well. Here Pārvatī, Jagajjananī (the mother of the universe) became his indispensable helpmate, and with her firmly implanted within his being the task became easier. Śiva in his Ardhanārīśvara personality was a very late mythological embodiment of the primordial bisexual creative principle".<sup>1</sup>

### *Śākta influence on Vaishṇavism*

Though seemingly Śāktism is unconnected with Vaishṇavism, yet in fact the former influenced the latter tremendously. In its wider sense Śāktism represents the cult of female deities. From this point of view, its earliest gift to Vaishṇavism was Śrī-Lakshmī (Ch. 8, pp. 223-30). This consort of Viṣṇu is identical with Kamalā, the tenth and last of the Daśamahāvidyās, the ten manifestations of the consort of Śiva.<sup>2</sup> Sarasvatī provides another link that connects Vaishṇavism with the cult of Śakti. Even after her affiliation with Vaishṇavism, she was identified with Bhadrakālī, one of the forms of Durgā.<sup>3</sup> A third link is furnished by the Earth Goddess, Bhūdevī or Mahīdevī, who figures prominently as a wife of Viṣṇu.

There are passages in the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* and the *Devībhāgavata* which describe the goddess as Viṣṇumāyā or Vaishṇavī (the śakti

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>Raychaudhuri, B.C., 'Links Between Vaishṇavism and Śāktism', *SCT*, pp. 40-44.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

or energy of Vishṇu) and Nārāyaṇī (the śakti of Nārāyaṇa) and *yoganidrā*. From the *Prapañchasāra-tantra* and the *Gautamīya-tantra*, it becomes evident that most forms of Vishṇu have Śaktis corresponding to them. In addition to the Vishṇu Śaktis emanating from the letters of the alphabet, there are goddesses called Kalās coming from the same source. These Kalās appear in the *Gautamīya-tantra* with such attributes that give them form and individuality.

Influence of female deities is specially manifest in the Kṛṣṇa cult.<sup>1</sup> In the Durgāstotras of the *Mbh.* the goddess is described as the 'younger sister of Kṛṣṇa', 'eldest-born in the family of the cowherd Nanda', 'born in the womb of Yaśodā', 'the favourite of Nārāyaṇa', 'the consort of Nārāyaṇa', etc.<sup>2</sup> The goddess that assisted Kṛṣṇa bears the name Ekānamśā. A goddess of the same name is represented in the *Matsya P.* as well as the Kumārikā Khaṇḍa of the *Skanda P.* as an emanation from Pārvatī. The two Ekānamśās are obviously identical with each other and with Durgā. The introduction of Durgā in the legends of Kṛṣṇa was the result of the desire of Vaishṇavism to ally itself with her cult. According to B.C. Raychaudhuri the manner of Durgā's representation in the *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira reminds us of Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadrā. He therefore suggests that the cult of Subhadrā was superimposed on that of Durgā.<sup>3</sup>

The Gopī element in Vaishṇavism is met with in the *Bhāgavata* and devotional songs of the Āḷvārs. Āṇḍāl or Koḍai, the daughter of Periyāḷvār regarded herself as a gopī of Kṛṣṇa. From this developed in the early medieval period the concept of Rādhā (Ch. 8, p. 233-4). Though Madhva (thirteenth century), the founder of the Dvaita school, did not favour the conception of Kṛṣṇa attended by Rādhā and, following Rāmānuja he conceived of Brahman and his Śakti in the forms of Vishṇu (Nārāyaṇa) and Lakshmī (Śrī) residing in heaven, yet the Rādhā concept was adopted and developed by the followers of Nimbārka, and later by those of Vallabha and Chaitanya. The followers of Vallabha sometimes dress and act like women.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *IMG*, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup>Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 41.



The influence of Tāntrika Śāktivāda on Vaishṇavism as early as the Gupta age is evidenced by the Gangdhar inscription mentioned above. According to the *Lakṣmītantra*, a Pāñcharātra text compiled some time between the ninth and twelfth centuries, Lakṣmī as an integral part of Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Being, is the embodiment of His sovereign will, and the instrumental cause of all creation. This text also sets down a full record of exclusive *Śakti-upāśanā* within the framework of Pāñcharātra religion. It describes her as performing five functions : *tirodhāna* or delusion; *śṛṣṭi* or creation; *sthiti* or sustenance; *laya* or dissolution; and *anugraha* or grace. These are also called her five *śaktis* as they sum up the different ways in which she exercises her power of action (*kriyā-śakti*).<sup>1</sup>

In Bengal a section of the Vaishṇavas developed the Sahajiyā cult. In Sahajiyā Vaishṇavism, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, like Śiva and Śakti, or Upāya and Prajñā, symbolise the Male and Female Principles. The Sahajiyā sect "records nothing but the spirit and practices of the earlier Buddhist and Hindu Tāntric cults, of course in a distinctly transformed form wrought through the evolution of centuries in different religious and cultural environments." The Mainamati plates (13th century) speak of the existence of the Sahajiyā cult in Tripurā. Chaṇḍīdāsa (14th century) was probably a Vaishṇava Sahajiyā and in his *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana* we can trace some of the fundamental doctrines of this sect.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Tārā and other Goddesses in Buddhism*

The gods and goddesses of early Buddhism were borrowed from the existing religious systems of India. The Buddhist Siri-Lakkhī for example, was conceptually a combination of Brāhmaṇical Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī since she is also a goddess of wisdom. There is also a separate goddess called Sarasvatī. The *Chulavaṃsa* mentions Vīralakkhī, the goddess who gives success to warriors.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For the place of Lakṣmī in Śrīvaiṣṇavism vide Billorey, R.K., 'Lakṣmī in Śrīvaiṣṇava Theology', in *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 110 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Kṛṣṇa Bhakti kā eka Akhyāta Sampradāya Sahajayāna', *Bhāratī*, Bombay, July 1964, VIII, xxiii, p. 50 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, *IMG*, p. 111.

In Mahāyānism, the goddesses came to exert an ever-increasing influence. Most of them were mere abstractions of some ideas, for the Buddhists deified almost all objects, cosmic and philosophical principles, literature, letters of the alphabet, directions and even the desires into gods and goddesses, with forms, colour, poses and weapons.<sup>1</sup>

The conceptions of Śūnyatā and Karuṇā of Mahāyāna Buddhism later developed into those of Prajñā and Upāya in Tāntrika Buddhism. Prajñā and Upāya symbolized the Female and Male Principles respectively. Prajñā is viewed as a goddess (Bhagavatī). In some Buddhist Tantras, a beautiful girl of sixteen adopted for *sādhana*, is styled Prajñā. Elsewhere Prajñā denotes the female organ, which is the seat of *mahāsukha*. Upāya and Prajñā are also called thunder (*vajra*) and the lotus (*padma*) respectively, the former symbolizing the male organ (*maṇi*, *liṅga*) and the latter, the female yoni.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the influence of Śāktism the Ādi Buddha of the Vajrayāna group found a consort in Prajñāpāramitā known by many other names. His emanations, the Dhyānī Buddhas, also obtained a divine consort or Śakti of his own. Later Buddhism is, in fact, nothing but a disguised Tāntrika cult of the Female principle.

Tārā is the most popular goddess of the Buddhist pantheon. She holds the same place in Buddhism which the goddess Durgā has in Brāhmaṇism. The Buddhists consider Tārā to be the great Mother Goddess, the symbol of primordial female energy and the consort of Avalokiteśvara, the symbol of the primordial male principle, just as Durgā is conceived as the consort of Śiva. She is 'the mother of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas'.<sup>3</sup> Derived from the root *tar*, Tārā is the name of the goddess who makes others, i.e., the devotees, cross the sea or ocean. She enables her devotees to surmount all sorts of dangers and calamities. A mere prayer to this goddess is sure to remove the eight mahābhayas (great dangers).

On the basis of his study of the *Sāadhanamālā* B. Bhattacharya has prepared a list of 24 forms of Tārā. According to S.K.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>For details vide *RHAI*, I, p. 346 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Dasgupta, K.K., 'Iconography of Tārā', *SCT*, pp. 115-2.

Saraswati Buddhist texts enumerate nearly 100 varieties of Tārā. That there were at least 108 names of Tārā current among the Buddhists would be evident from the stotra styled *Āryātārābhaṭṭa-rikānāma-ashṭottara śatakastotra*.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Māñjuśrīmūlakalpā* Tārā occurs in her various forms like Bhṛkuṭī, Lochanā, Śvetā, Paṇḍaravāsini, Sutārā, etc. From the seventh century onwards, we find the exuberance of Tārāstotras (e.g. the *Sāraṅghara-stotras* composed in praise of Tārā by the eighth century Kashmiri poet Sarvajñamitra). According to the *Sammohatantra*, Nīlasarasvatī or Ugratārā was born in a lake called Chola on the Western side of the Meru which was included in the Chīnadeśa. We come across five varieties of Tārā, classified according to colour—green, white, yellow, blue and red.

The Buddhists also knew Tārā as a serpent-goddess under the name of Jaṅgulī. She was a near approach, iconographically speaking, to the Jaina goddess Padmāvatī. Jaṅgulī is said to be as old as the Buddha himself who is said to have given to Ānanda the secret mantra for her worship. Of the eight kinds of 'fear' which are dispelled by Tārā, to which fact she owes her name, the fear from serpents is one.<sup>2</sup>

D.C. Bhattacharya has drawn the attention of scholars to a Buddhist goddess named Mahāmāyāvijayavahini who was conceived as a fierce aspect of the supreme goddess Tārā.<sup>3</sup>

Hirananda Sastri and B. Bhattacharya have attempted to show that the cult of Tārā must have been Buddhist not Brāhmaṇical, and also foreign, in origin.<sup>4</sup> Sastri believes that the Tārā worship originated somewhere towards Ladakh and that she came to India via Nepal. Sylvain Lévi agrees, on the authority of the *Tārātantra* and some other Sanskrit works, that the worship of Tārā and the Tāntrika vāmāchāra practices came from China.<sup>5</sup> P.C. Bagchi also insists on the Chinese and Tibetan influences on the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical Tantras.<sup>6</sup> Joseph Needham has also concluded

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, A.K., 'Tārā as a Serpent Deity and its Jain Counterpart Padmāvatī', *SCT*, pp. 152-68.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, D.C., 'An Unknown Form of Tārā', *SCT*, pp. 134-42.

<sup>4</sup>*MAI*, XX, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Lévi, *Le Nepal*, I, p. 346 f.

<sup>6</sup>Bagchi, *Studies in Tantras*, pp. 46-55.



that Tāntrikism was “really Taoist”.<sup>1</sup> But opponents of this theory<sup>2</sup> point out that (a) Tāriṇī and Tārā as names of the Devī appear in the *Mbh.* and the *Brahmāṇḍa P.* (XXXI.12). (b) The Buddhist Tārā is almost exactly similar to that of the Brāhmaṇical Durgā, the hoary antiquity of which is now a proven fact. (c) Parnaśabarī, a comparatively late form of Tārā, is clearly reminiscent of the description of the Hindu Devī as ‘deity worshipped by the Śabarās, Barbaras or Pulindas’ in the *HV* (*supra*). Tārā thus appears to be a Buddhist form of the Hindu Devī Durgā. (d) A number of early representations of Tārā are found in the Buddhist caves of the Western Deccan. But there is nothing in them to show that their artists either themselves came from the Indo-Tibetan borderlands or consciously illustrated a foreign deity in Indian garb, at places so much distant from the Indo-Tibetan borderlands. (e) A large number of the elements of Tāntrikism are found in the Vedic literature itself.<sup>3</sup> To us Sircar also seems to be right when he asserts that Tārā was originally worshipped by some aboriginal people (probably of Eastern India) and was adopted in both the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist pantheons in the early centuries of the Christian era. However in course of time several goddesses, including a few Mongoloid ones, merged in her.<sup>4</sup> It is also possible that she was originally a goddess who was conceived as dwelling among stars (cf. Persian Sitārā, Greek Aster, Latin Stella and English ‘star’ and also the names of such foreign goddesses as Ishtar, Astarte, Atargatis, Astaroth, etc.). Many such streams seem to have later culminated in the conception of Tārā whose cult was established in different parts of India by the sixth century A.D.

### *Goddesses in Jainism*

The Mother Goddess of other Indian sects found her way into Jainism quite easily. Jaina texts like the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, *Āchāra Dinakara* etc. show in their classification of Jaina goddesses that many of them were adaptation from the existing non-Jaina cults.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by N.N. Bhattacharya in ‘Chinese Origin of the Cult of Tārā’, *SCT*, pp. 143-4.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *RHAI*, I, p. 33 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Sircar, D.C., ‘The Tārā of Candradvīpa’, *SCT*, pp. 128-33.

The *Āchāra Dinakara* mentions three classes of Jaina goddesses—*prasādadevīs* (goddess of general nature), *sampradāya-devīs* (sectarian goddesses) and *kula-devīs* (Tāntrika goddesses). The last category includes goddesses like Kaṅkāli, Kāli, Mahākāli, Chāmuṇḍā, Jvālāmukh, Kāmākhyā, Kapālinī, Bhadrakāli, Durgā, Lalitā, Gaurī, Sumaṅgalā, Rohiṇī, Sulakatā, Tripura Kurukulla, Chandrāvati, Yamaghantā, etc. In his *Abhidhānachintāmaṇi* Hemachandra mentions cults of sixteen Śruta or Vidyādevīs, of eight Mothers such as Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, etc., of the mothers of Tīrthaṃkaras such as Marudevī, Vijayā, etc., and of Śrī or Lakshmī and a host of other goddesses.<sup>1</sup> Śrī or Lakshmī has a prominent place in Jaina literature. The cult of the sixty-four Yoginīs was also adopted by Jainism.

The cult of the Yakshiṇīs also became an important feature of Jainism. In the Jaina texts they are sometimes described as female attendants (Śāsanadevatās) of the Tīrthaṃkaras and sometimes as leaders of the women converts. They are endowed with semi-divine attributes and symbolism of various kinds.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Archaeological Evidence for the Popularity of Śakti Worship*

The combined testimony of literature, archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics reveal the extent of the popularity of Śāktism in ancient India. To take the archaeological evidence first. Not much can be said about the post-Harappan images of the Mother Goddess till the advent of the Maurya period. One headless image of Mother Goddess was found from Inamgaon near Poona which has been assigned to c. 1200 B.C.<sup>3</sup> A small gold tablet, representing a naked woman was dug out near Lauriya Nandangarh. It was identified by Bloch as an iconic representation of Pṛthivī and was ascribed by him to about the 8th or 7th century B.C.<sup>4</sup> A small gold tablet, similar to that one, was found at Lauriya and a small gold figure was discovered from the Piprahwa stūpa, belonging to a period not earlier than the Mauryan. These survivals and also some of the oldest terracotta pieces recovered by Marshall from the

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *IMG*, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Goyal, *RHAI*, I, p. 180 f.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *IMG*, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

ruins of Bhita prove the continuity of the Mother Goddess cult in the post-Harappan period.

The female deity of the Lauriya Piprahwa type is also seen on the ring stones which have been found at Rupar, Taxila Purana Qila (Indraprastha), Bhita, Kara, Kauśāmbī, Jhūsī, Rājghāt, Mathurā, Saṅkīśā, Vaiśālī and Patna. These are also assigned to the Maurya-Śuṅga period. According to Banerjea, these circular discs with female figures may be regarded as the forerunners of the jantras of the later Tāntrika cult.<sup>1</sup>

A study of the extant Yaksha and Yakshiṇī images shows that the later images of the gods and goddesses were shaped after them.<sup>2</sup> Of the earliest Yakshiṇī sculptures mention must be made of the Alakamandā and Sudarśanā Yakshiṇīs of Bharhut and also to their Buddhistic partners, Sirimā Devatā and Chulakokā Devatā, belonging to the first century B.C. Sudarśanā stands on a makara. Sirimā Devatā was adopted by the Buddhists from the Brāhmaṇical Śrī or Lakshmī whose images have been found at Bharhut, Sāñchī, Bodh Gayā, Kauśāmbī, Pitalkhora and many other places. Analogous figurines have been discovered at Ahichchhatrā, Hastinapur, Saraimohana and Masaon near Vārāṇasī, Kauśāmbī and Vaiśālī.<sup>3</sup> On a Bharhut pillar of the Śuṅga age a female standing figure is shown playing a harp. It may represent Sarasvatī.<sup>4</sup> In this connection the occurrence of the figures Lakshmī and Gajalakshmī on early Indians coins may also be recalled.<sup>5</sup>

The cult of a nude goddess having Roman-Egyptian influence is represented in terracotta plaques of the Kushāṇa age found from Bhita, Kauśāmbī and Jhusi. Parthian influence on Śāktism is seen in the terracotta votive tanks enshrining a female deity surrounded by birds and musicians. These votive tanks are found from various sites such as Ahichchhatrā, Hastinapur, Sirkap, etc.<sup>6</sup> On a miniature relief from Mathurā belonging to the Kushāṇa period a fusion of the male and female deities (Ardhanārīśvara) which became popular in later ages, is noticed.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-6.

<sup>4</sup>Sinha, B.P., 'Evolution of the Śakti Worship in India', *SCT*, pp. 45-55.

<sup>5</sup>Bandyopadhyays, 'Gajalakṣmī on Early Indian Coins', in *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 91 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>7</sup>Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 53 f.



Some of the finest sculptures of the Gupta and later periods depict Vaishṇava, Śaiva, Buddhist and Jaina goddesses. Images of popular river goddesses like Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, etc., are also found. But it was the Mahishamardinī form of Durgā that became the most popular. However, the earliest representation of the Mahishamardinī form of the goddess found so far is probably a first century B.C. terracotta plaque from Nagar in Tonk district, Rajasthan, now preserved in the Amber Museum. Six statues of the Kushāṇa age, preserved in the Mathurā Museum, appear to contain some other early representations of the Mahishamardinī form.<sup>1</sup>

*Literary, Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence for the Popularity of Śāktism*

References to various goddesses in secular Sanskrit literature are quite numerous. The *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa relates the stories of the birth of Kumāra or Kārttikeya through the union of Śiva and Pārvatī; of the resurrection of Satī, the first wife of Śiva, as Umā; of her penances to win her husband again; of the burning of Kāmadeva; of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī etc. In the *Vikramorvaśīya* of Kālidāsa, Lakshmī and Sarasvatī are rivals of each other. In the *Kāmasūtra* Vātsyāyana informs that wealthy citizens used to flock every fortnight to the temple of Sarasvatī to enjoy dramatic performances, etc. Kālī is referred to in the *Raghuvamśa* and in the *Kumārasambhava* and is described as the Divine Mother. The earliest reference to a Buddhist worshipper of Tārā is found in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*. Śiva and Umā are mentioned in the *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravī. In his *Kādambarī* Bāṇa describes the goddess cult of the wild Śābaras and in his *Harshacharita* refers to the destructive character of the goddess. The *Gauḍavaho* of Vākpati (c.725 A.D.) describes the awe-inspiring atmosphere of the temple of the goddess Vindhyavāsini, who was worshipped by the Śābaras with human sacrifice. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* refers many a times to human sacrifices before the goddess. In the *Rāmacharita* of Sandhyākaranandin mention is made of the festivities associated with the worship of Umā. The *Kālaviveka* of Jīmūtavāhana describes the obscene festivals

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 162 f.

connected with the Śakti cult. The *Devīśataka* of Ānandavardhana of Kashmir mentions the popularity of the Mother Goddess cult in that region. Reference may also be made in this connection to the *Saundaryalaharī*, the well-known ode to the goddess, attributed to Śaṅkara.

Now the epigraphic and numismatic evidence. The popularity of goddess Śrī-Lakshmī, as we noted in an earlier chapter, is indicated by her appearance in the Gajalakshmī and other forms on early Indian coins, such as the inscribed issues of Kauśāmbī and Ujjayinī, the coins of some early rulers of Ayodhyā and Mathurā and of the Śaka Satraps of Mathurā and those of Pantaleon, Agathocles, Maues and Azilises. The representation of Lakshmī is found also on the coins of the Imperial Guptas and some of their successors. The post-Gupta issues of Jayanāga and Samāchāradeva depict Lakshmī on the reverse. The so-called imitation Gupta coins in debased gold from the various places in East Pakistan bear on the reverse the figure of an eight- or six-armed goddess.

Śrī-Lakshmī and Durgā-Pārvatī etc. are mentioned in a large number of inscriptions of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. The Gangdhar inscription of 423 speaks of a temple full of Dākinīs. It was built in the honour of the Divine Mothers. The Mandasaur stone pillar inscription of Yośodharman mentions Kshitidharatanayā which evidently refers to Umā or Pārvatī.<sup>1</sup> The Khoh copper plate inscription of Saṁkshobha records the installation of a temple for the goddess Piṣṭapurī and an endowment for its maintenance. Her name also occurs in two copper plates of Śarvanātha. The Nagarjuni hill cave inscription of Anantavarman Maukhari records the installation in the cave of an image representing Śiva and Pārvatī. Another Nagarjuni hill cave inscription of the same king refers to the goddess Pārvatī under the names of Kātyāyanī and Bhavānī and stresses upon her Mahishamardinī form.

### *Regional Distribution of Śāktism*

The Śakti cult had a very long and popular career in Orissa. The temples of Mohinī, Kapālinī and Gaurī at Bhubaneswar, Vimalā at Purī, Kīchakeśvarī at Khiching, Virajā at Jājpur, Maṅgalā at Kakatpur, Ugratārā at Bhusandapur, Vārāhī at Chaurasi, Saralā

<sup>1</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālīna Abhilekha*, p. 336.

at Jhankad, Solapuamā and Chaṇḍī at Cuttack, Sapta-Mātṛkā at Belkhandi in Kalahandi and Samaleśvarī at Sambalpur show the wide distribution of the cult in the different corners of this region.<sup>1</sup> In a Kalahandi copper plate grant (c. 5th or 6th century A.D.) King Tushtikara of Orissa is mentioned as a worshipper of the goddess Stambheśvarī, the family goddess of the Sulkīs. The same goddess is mentioned in the grants of the Bhañjas and Tuṅgas who ruled over different parts of Orissa from the 8th to the 11th century A.D.<sup>2</sup> From the Banpur copper plates of the Somavarṁśī king Indraratha (first half of the eleventh century) it appears that the cult of Tārā was also very popular there.

The Śakti cult flourished in Assam and Bengal, more than anywhere else. The Nausari plates of the Rāshtrakūṭa Govinda III (794-814 A.D.) refer to the great veneration in which the goddess Tārā was held by the Pāla kings of eastern India. They show that the Pāla standard or banner bore the representation of goddess Tārā. Kāmarūpa finds a prominent place in all the early accounts of the four Śākta Piṭhas, and in the *Kālikā P.* account of the seven Piṭhas no less than three are located in Kāmarūpa, the seat of the goddess Kāmākhyā.<sup>3</sup>

That there was a pronounced Tāntrika element in the Mother-Goddess cult of Western India is clear from the Gangdhar inscription of 423 A.D. mentioned above. In this the temple of the Mothers is described as a terrible abode full of Ḍākinīs or female ghouls (*ḍākinī-samprakīrṇa*) and the goddesses themselves are represented as uttering loud and tremendous shouts of joy and stirring up the very oceans with the winds rising from the tāntrika rites (*pramudita-ghan-ātyartha-nihṛādinī* and *tantrōd-bhūta-prabala-pavan-odvartit-āmbhonidhi*).<sup>4</sup>

In Rajasthan Śakti worship is at least as old as the first century A.D. The ancient site of Nagar has yielded a few terracotta plaques of Mahishāsūramardīnī (now in the Museum of Amber) of the 1st century A.D. From Rairh are found a very

<sup>1</sup>Behara, K.C., 'The Evolution of Śakti Cult at Jājpur, Bhubaneswar and Puri', *SCT*, pp. 74-86.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Lahiri, Bela, 'Śakti Cult and Coins of North-Eastern India', *SCT*, pp. 34-9; Thakur, Upendra, 'Tāntric Cult in Eastern India', in *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 112 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Gupṭakālīna Abhilekha*, p. 347.



large number of nude and semi-nude Mother Goddesses. Sambhar has yielded a terracotta plaque (of white clay) of Mahishāsūramardini, believed to be of the 1st century A.D.<sup>1</sup> In an inscription found in the Bhramaramātā temple near Chhoti Sadri dated 491 A.D. the goddess is described as *Asura-dāraṇa-tikṣṇa-sūlā* (holding a sharp spear piercing the Asura, i.e. Mahishāsura) and as *siṃh-ogrā-yukta ratham-āsthita-chaṇḍavegā* (moving in terrific speed in a chariot drawn by a fierce lion). According to D.C. Sircar<sup>2</sup> the second epithet is very significant because in the early sculptures of Mahishamardini the lion is sometimes absent and, even when present, does not usually figure as drawing a chariot carrying the goddess.

In Rajasthan Śakti is worshipped in the forms of Kālī or Kālakā, Durgā, Chāmuṇḍā, Aṣṭabhujā and Ambā. Besides she is worshipped under local names, viz. Karṇimātā, Mokaīamātā, Piplādmātā, Sakīyāmātā, Khokrimātā, Śākambharī, Āśāpuridevī, Kinsariyā or Kaivasamātā, Khimalmātā, Kailādevī, Sakrāimātā, Jinamātā, Susānimātā, Dadhimātā, Silamātā, Chauthamātā, etc. Śakti was worshipped also in the form of Mātṛkās at Mandor and other places.<sup>3</sup> The Rajput dynasties patronized Śāktism outside Rajasthan also. A grant of Vināyakapāla, the Pratihāra king of Kanauj, dated 931 A.D., records that his predecessors Nāgabhaṭa, Bhoja and Mahendrapāla were devout worshippers of Mother Goddess (*Paramabhagavatibhaktā*). Even today the Rajputs, both the descendants of the ruling dynasties and the common man, worship her under various local names.

In the Deccan the Sapta-Mātṛkās appear to be the favourite deities of the early Chālukyas. In Tamilnadu, goddess worship is frequently mentioned as early as the Śāṅgama literature. Among the many names of Śakti occurring in early Tamil literature are included Amārī, Kumārī, Gaurī, Śamarī, Śūlī, Nīlī, Aiyāi (Āryā), Śeyyaval, Koṇṇavai, Nallāl, Kaṇṇi, Śaṅkarī, etc.<sup>4</sup> Of these the name of Kumārī may be taken to indicate her virgin character. The *Periplus* (c. 60-80 A.D.) notes: "Beyond this there is another place called Comari at which are the Cape of the Comari and a harbour; hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves

<sup>1</sup>Majumdar, P.K., 'Śakti Worship in Rajasthan', *SCT*, pp. 92-100.

<sup>2</sup>Sircar, D.C., 'Śakti Cult in Western India', *SCT*, pp. 87-91.

<sup>3</sup>Majumdar, P.K., *op. cit.*, p. 92-3.

<sup>4</sup>Mahalingam, T.V., 'The Cult of Śakti in Tamilnad', *SCT*, pp. 17-33.

for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed". The *Mbh.* narrates that "as Gaurī, she (Durgā) is the sister of Vāsudeva and in this form she inhabits the southern mountains".<sup>1</sup> Koṛṇavai was recognised as Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva. This is apparent from reference to her in the *Perumbāṇār-ruppaḍai* and *Tirumurugār-ruppaḍai*. According to the *Tolkāppiyam*, Koṛṇavai was the goddess of the region of Pālai. According to the *Śilappadikāram* peacocks and parrots, fowls, sandal, grains and oblations of rice with flesh and blood were offered to her. Her dance was known as *tunaigai*<sup>2</sup>. The description of the goddess as Āraṇyānī or the goddess of forests is found reflected in the description of the Devī as Kānamarśelvi in the *Ahanāṇūru*, and Kāḍamarśelvi in the *Maṇimekalai*. In the *Maṇimekalai* she is described as standing with a beggar's bowl alleviating the hunger of the devils.<sup>3</sup>

The temples for Durgā were built even in the pre-Pallava days, though of perishable material. Pallava sculptures of Durgā are found in the rock-cut caves at Singavaram, Vallam and the Varāhamaṇḍapa, Mahishamardinī, Trimūrti and Ādivarāha caves at Mahabalipuram.<sup>4</sup>

An interesting aspect of the Durgā cult in the Far South exemplified by extant sculptures of the Pallava period is her marked association with Viṣṇu. The *Śilappadikāram* calls her Malavark-kilaṅgilai, i.e., the younger sister of Viṣṇu. As noted by T.V. Mahalingam,<sup>5</sup> the combinations of Mahishamardinī with Anantaśāyin in the Mahishamardinī cave at Mahabalipuram and the Ranganātha cave at Singavaram, the proximity of Durgā to the shrine of Viṣṇu in the Trimūrti cave, the depiction of her images in closeness with Trivikrama in the Varāhamaṇḍapa and Bhūvarāha in the Ādivarāha cave temple, all again at Mahabalipuram, also seem to have some significance.

During the Chola imperialism under Vijayālaya (850-870 A.D.) and Āditya (870-907 A.D.) the cult of Durgā continued to flourish.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.

The Tiruvalangadu plates of Rājendra Chola state that Vijayālaya constructed at Tanjore a temple for Niśumbhasūdanī.

An interesting iconographic attribute of Durgā in Tamilnadu is the association of the stag or buck with her. In the representation of Durgā in the Varāhamaṇḍapa and Ādivarāha cave temple at Mahabalipuram and in the Kailāśanātha temple at Kāñchīpuram the stag is shown with the lion.<sup>1</sup>

Another interesting feature of the Durgā worship in the Tamil country during the Pallava and early Chola periods was the offering of flesh from nine parts of the body. This was nothing but religious self-mutilation.

Another aspect of the Śakti cult which was perhaps more popular in Tamilnadu than anywhere else was that of Jyeshthā. She was popularly known as Alakshmī and the elder sister of Lakshmī.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the deification of a woman named Kannakī into Pattanikadavul, the goddess of chastity, is met with in the *Śilappadikāram*. This lady destroyed the city of Madurā by fire to avenge the execution of her husband Kovalan. The Kannakī cult was finally absorbed into the Kālī or Bhagavatī cult.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Kapoor, S.N., *Śrī Laṅkā men Hindu Dahrma*, Meerut. 1984-85, p. 101 ff.



## Chapter 13

# The Saura (Solar) Cult

### *Proto-historic Background*

Like most other nations of the world the Indians also worshipped the sun-god from a very early period. Geometric and naturalistic sun symbols (rayed orb of various designs, simple circles, wheel, skirl device, svastika, bull, unicorn, eagle or falcon) are found on the Indus seals and other proto-historic objects, though no anthropomorphic representation of the sun has been found on them so far.<sup>1</sup>

### *Sun Worship in the Vedic Age*

In the *RV* solar gods are the most numerous. We have Sūrya, Savitr, the Aśvins, Mitra, Vivasvān, Vishṇu, Bhaga, Aryaman, Pūshan, Āditya and the goddesses Ushas and Sūryā. Not all of them are given distinct individuality, but glimpses are provided into the natural phenomenon or idea behind their apotheosis. Many of them have obvious affinities with their Iranian counterparts and Indo-European prototypes. Sūrya as a sun-god is thought of primarily as the visible orb of light. He is golden. His chariot is drawn by seven horses. He is a healer, obviously because of the healing qualities of the sun rays. Savitā, 'the stimulator of everything' (*sarvasya prasavitā*),<sup>2</sup> denotes his abstract qualities. Pūshan specifies his benevolent power, manifested chiefly as a pastoral deity. Bhaga, according to Yāska presides over the forenoon.<sup>3</sup> Vivasvān (Iranian Vivanhant) probably originally represented the

<sup>1</sup>Srivastava, V.C., *Sun-Worship in Ancient India*, Allahabad, 1972, pp. 24-34.

<sup>2</sup>*DHI*, p. 428.

<sup>3</sup>The words *bhagavat* and *bhāgya* are derived from *bhaga* which is the Indian form of the Indo-European word *bogu* = god.

rising sun but was also looked upon as the first sacrificer, the ancestor of the human race. The Vedic legend (*RV*, I. 164) about the marriage of Saranyu, the daughter of Tvashtā, with Vivasvān was obviously the basis of the later Paurāṇika story about Sūrya marrying Samjñā, the daughter of Viśvakarmā, her desertion of Sūrya after leaving with him her shadow (Chhāyā) due to her inability to bear her husband's excessive brilliance and Viśvakarmā's attempt to reduce it. Mitra (Iranian Mithra),<sup>1</sup> closely associated with Varuṇa, was regarded as a god of pure achievement and thrived in *ṛta*. Aryaman, so far his description is concerned, is almost wholly devoid of physical traits and hence does not correspond to any aspect of the sun. Vishṇu, the personification of the swift moving sun and famous for his march across the sky in three great *padas*, later became one of the main constituents of the composite god of the Vaishṇava religion. The Aśvins are the most concrete of solar gods. Their solar character is affirmed by their connection with Ushas (Dawn) who comes in their wake,<sup>2</sup> and with Sūryā (daughter of Sūrya) and Savitṛ.

Most of the deities mentioned above along with a few others like Varuṇa, Amśa Daksha, Dhātṛ, Mārtaṇḍa, etc., came to constitute a special class of gods collectively known as the Ādityas,<sup>3</sup> 'sons of Aditi', though Aditi was also looked upon as the mother of all the other Vedic divinities. Six Ādityas are mentioned in the *RV* (II. 27): Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuṇa, Daksha and Amśa. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* at one place fixes their number at eight while at two other places it raises the number to twelve and identifies them with the 12 months. The epics, Purāṇas and other later texts accept the number twelve and usually name them as (1) Dhātā, (2) Mitra, (3) Aryaman, (4) Rudra, (5) Varuṇa, (6) Sūrya, (7) Bhaga, (8) Vivasvān, (9) Pūshan, (10) Savitā, (11) Tvashtā and (12) Vishṇu. Many of the solar deities of the Vedic period are found here.<sup>4</sup>

The Brāhmaṇas, the Upanishads and the Sūtras allude to the worship of Sūrya and his many aspects. As is well-known the

<sup>1</sup>Hodivala, S.K., 'Mitra-Mithra', *AIOC*, II.

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed study of Ushā, vide, Shembvarnekar, 'Uṣas', *ABORI*, XVII.

<sup>3</sup>The word Āditya is also used in singular number indicating the sun.

<sup>4</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 134 f.

Gāyatrī mantra of a Brāhmaṇa text, also known as Sāvitrī, is made up of a Ṛgvedic verse (III.62.10) — *Tat Saviturvareṇyaṃ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt* in the Vedic metre gāyatrī, with the addition of the *praṇava* (*Om*) and three *vyahṛtis* (*bhū*, *bhūva* and *sva*) in the beginning.<sup>1</sup> In the Āraṇyakas, Upanishads and Gṛhyasūtras, Sūrya is identified with Brahman (*asōvādityo Brahma*). The *TĀ* (X.1) lays down the Āditya-gāyatrī as *Bhāskarāya vidmahe madādyutikarāya dhīmahi tanna Ādityaḥ prachodayāt*, it being a little different from the *Maitrāyaṇīya Samhitā* Sūrya-gāyatrī which reads—*Bhāskarāya vidmahe Prabhākarāya dhīmahi tanno Bhānuḥ prachodayāt*. The eight-syllable Tāntrika Sūrya-mantra, *Om ghr̥ṇi Sūrya Ādityaḥ*, is nothing but one of the Āditya-mantras of the *TĀ* with the simple addition of the *praṇava* prefix.<sup>2</sup>

### The Solar Symbols

The sun-god is represented by various symbols and the wheel is one of them. A gold plate also symbolizes the sun (*ŚB*, VII.4.1.10). A gold disc was laid at the time of piling of the fire altar to represent the sun (*ŚB*, VII. 41.1.10). The lotus is also found in the hands of sun-images, and it was later taken over by Viṣṇu and his wife Lakṣmī. The lotus is inseparably connected with the sun probably because it blooms only while the sun shines. Garuḍa, the bird mount of the sun, is absent in the Vedic literature though in a Ṛgvedic passage Garutmān apparently stands for the sun (*divyaḥ suparṇo Garutmān*). According to another view the sun is a horse brought (i.e. ushered) by Ushā (*RV*, VII.77.3). He is also quite often described as riding a car 'some times drawn by one, and at other times by several, four or seven, swift and ruddy horses or mares'.<sup>3</sup> In the Shoḍāśin sacrifice a horse was placed in the hands of the priest and it symbolized the sun. The horse was a strong and probably the fastest animal known to the Aryans and they ascribed its speed and strength to its solar origin. The

<sup>1</sup>*PTR*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* For the history of Sun worship in the pre-Paurāṇika age vide also, Dass, Ayodhya Chandra, 'Pre-Paurāṇic Form of Sun Worship in Atharva-veda Samhitā,' *Vishveshvarananda Indological Journal*, XIX, 1-2, pp. 20-9; Ursekar, H.S., 'The Sun in the Ṛgveda', *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, XXVIII, 1968, pp. 55-63.

<sup>3</sup>*PTR*, p. 136.



relationship between the sun-god and the serpent, however, is one of hostility for the serpent symbolizes evil, and the sun goodness. Vishṇu in his Kṛṣṇa avatāra fought and subjugated Kāliya, the water-snake; Vishṇu sleeps over Śeṣhanāga, and his mount Garuḍa eats serpents.<sup>1</sup>

### *Origin of the Solar Cult*

Though the sun worship as a cult and sect became established only in the epic-Paurāṇika age (*infra*), its antecedents may be traced back to the Vedic texts. In *RV* I.50.7 Sūrya is 'the soul of movable and immovable world'. It is significantly said that the sun god is one though he is variously named. In later times he was identified with Prajāpati and the Gāyatrī mantra became indicative of his supremacy. At some places the Āraṇyakas and Upanishads regard the sun as the best manifestation of the highest reality. Among the Upanishadic seers Bharadvāja, Ghora Āṅgīrasa, Kaushītaki, Pippalāda and Vāmadeva were prominent sun worshippers. The ṛshi Kaushītaki, who worshipped the sun in the morning, at noon and in the evening, also laid down the three mantras with which the rising sun, the sun on the meridian and the setting sun are to be worshipped with offerings of water, flowers, sandal etc. In the Gṛhyasūtras there are definite instructions for the *sandhyopāsana* which is nothing but sun worship.

The Vedic seers adored the sun primarily for the removal of sins and bestowal of riches, food, fame, health etc. In *RV* VII.60.1 and I.62.2 the sinner wishes the rising sun to declare him sinless to Mitra, Varuṇa and other gods. Ṛshi Kaushītaki adored the sun for the removal of sin. In the Upanayana ceremony Savitā is prayed to protect the student so that he may not die. The *Khadira GS* (IV.1.14 and 23) prescribes the adoration of the sun for the attainment of riches and fame.<sup>2</sup> The idea of the association of the sun with the removal of sin and the bestowal of riches, food etc. continued to be popular in later ages as well. Thus, many elements of the sectarian sun worship may be traced back to the Vedic texts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *The Indian Theogony*, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup>Bhandarkar, *VSMR*, p. 216 f.

<sup>3</sup>Srivastava, *op. cit.*, p. 178 ff.; 'Studies in the Origins of the Solar Cult and Sect in India,' *PIHC*, 1965, p. 69 f.

However the Saura or Solar cult, one of the five cardinal cults of Paurāṇika Hinduism, took shape gradually in the post-Vedic period and became a fact only in the early centuries of the Christian era or shortly before it. According to Hopkins the Saura sect is as old as the Vaishṇava and Śaiva sects and V.C. Srivastava places its origin in 5th-4th century B.C. But it appears highly unlikely. Pāṇini (c. 5th-4th century B.C.) and Patañjali (2nd century B.C.) refer to the worship of Sūrya but not to his cult. However the two Epics contain clear indications of the existence of the cult associated with the solar god. The *Rāmā.* refers to saints who were specially devoted to the worship of the sun.<sup>1</sup> In *Rāmā.* V. 106 Rāma worships the sun by ceremonially reciting the *Ādityahṛdayastava* under the advice of Agastya before he killed Rāvaṇa. The *Mbh.* (II.50.16) describes sun as Deveśvara. He appears in human form before Kunti, Karṇa, Yudhisṭhira and Jamadgni. He has a family and various attendants of his own. He is the day-maker, light-giver, corn-producer, rain-maker, embodiment of *tejas*, and identical with time. Karṇa, the brave hero, is his son and exclusive worshipper. In the battle between Karṇa and Arjuna Ādityas take side of the former. The *Mbh.* (III.3.3) also contains a *stotra* of 108 names of Āditya which the sage Dhaumya advised Yudhisṭhira to recite in the Kāmyakavana. It is also claimed in the Epic that a sun worshipper can remember his previous birth, gain sharp memory and intellect as well as wealth. Yudhisṭhira was bestowed a vessel by Sūrya for the production of all the food wanted by the former.

The two laudatory poems—the one recited by Rāma in the *Rāmā.* and the other taught by Dhaumya to Yudhisṭhira in the *Mbh.*—give one a clear idea of the importance of Sūrya. In the *Mbh.* it is claimed that the 108 names of Sūrya were originally taught by Brahmā to Śakra and by the latter to Nārada who in turn taught them to Dhaumya. The *Mbh.* identifies Sūrya with all the great gods. He is adored by all gods, Siddhas, Vasus, Rudras etc. Sudarśana Chakra is made of his lustre. He is Kāla, Ādideva, Charācharātmā, Sūkshmātmā and Viśvakarmā. The three Vedas are his form.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Srivastava, *Sun-Worship in Ancient India*, 1972, p. 183; Pande, L.P., *Sun Worship in Ancient India*, 1972.

<sup>2</sup>Srivastava, *op. cit.*, p. 178 ff.

*Evidence for the Continued Existence of the Indigenous Solar Cult*

Apart from the epics there are other evidences for the continued existence of an indigenous Solar cult in the two centuries preceding the birth of Christ and in the post-Christian centuries. Some figures on ancient Indian coins and a Bharhut medallion containing a bust of the sun god with a lotus representing his rays suggest his popularity in the pre-Christian period. The coins of the Uddehikas and the Pañchāla Mitra kings like Sūryamitra and Bhānumitra bear on their reverse the solar disc on a pedestal.<sup>1</sup> At Bodhgayā on a stone railing the god is seen riding on a one-wheeled chariot (*eka chakra*) drawn by four horses. He is attended on either side by a female figure (Ushā and Pratyūshā) shooting arrows. The Buddhist cave at Bhājā of the first cent. B.C. bears on the left side of its facade Sūrya seated in a quadriga in company of two female figures (probably Ushā and Pratyūshā). At Lala Bhagat on one face of a many sided column the sun god is seen riding on a four-horse chariot with one wheel (2nd cent. A.D.). A more or less similar composition is seen in the Sūrya relief found in a small cave at Khandagiri (1st cent. A.D.). All these reliefs belonging to the various regions of the country seem to have been inspired by the Ṛgvedic description of Sūrya.<sup>2</sup>

The continued existence of the indigenous sun worship in India is evidenced by epigraphic records also. During the reign of Skandagupta (455-67 A.D.) a Brāhmaṇa named Devavishṇu donated some money to the Sun temple of Indrapura (mod. village of Indore in the Bulandshahar Dist. of U.P.).<sup>3</sup> The Gwalior record of Mihirakula (c. 512-30 A.D.) refers to the construction of a sun temple at Gopādri (Gwalior).<sup>4</sup> In the Sonepat seal, the three ancestors of Harsha namely Prabhākaravardhana, Ādityavardhana and Rājyavardhana I are given the epithet Paramādityabhakta and the same title is given to the Gurjara-Pratihāra kings Vināyakapāla and Rāmabhadra. A seal discovered by Spooner at Basarh contains a fire altar with the solar disc placed above it. The

<sup>1</sup>For a study of solar symbols on ancient Indian coins see *DHI*, p. 138 ff.; also see Singh, O.P., *Religion and Iconography on Early Indian Coins*, Varanasi, 1978, Ch. VI.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *AIU*, p. 466; *DHI*, p. 432 f.

<sup>3</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, p. 260.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 360.



legend on the seal written in Gupta characters reads *Bhagavata Ādityasya*.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the literary evidence, a poem of 100 verses (*Sūrya-śataka*) was composed by Mayūra (probably the father-in law of Bāṇabhaṭṭa) in honour of Sūrya. The Sūtradhara in the *Mālatī-mādhava* prays to Sūrya in a general way, and the *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* contains prayers to the god, and several mythologies connected with him. The Smṛti text quoted in Ānandagiri's *Śaṅkaravijaya-kāvya* describes Savitā as the one eye of the universe, the cause of creation, preservation and destruction of the world, the receptacle of the three guṇas (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), and as identical with Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Bāṇabhaṭṭa's *Harsha-charita* describes how Harshavardhana's father Prabhākara-varḍhana, a devotee of Āditya, paid his homage to the god and recited everyday early in the morning, at noon and in the evening the *Ādityahrdaya-mantra*. Kṛṣṇamiśra, an eleventh century dramatist, presents the Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas and Sauras under the general command of goddess Sarasvatī as engaged in battle with the Buddhists, Jains and Chārvākas under the general command of Mahāmoha.

#### *Nature of the Indigenous Saura Sect*

From the above account it is obvious that there existed in India a sect devoted to the exclusive worship of the sun<sup>2</sup> probably from the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. The ideological connection of this indigenous Saura sect with the Vedic tradition is quite apparent. In the *Mbh.* the Sauras are said to have been expert in Vedic studies. The survival of the Vedic names of the sun, the description of Sūrya as Vedakartā, and his invocation by Kuntī with Vedic hymns also prove it. The account of the Saura sect with its six subdivisions as given by Ānandagiri in his *Śaṅkaravijaya-kāvya* also proves its Vedic affiliation. Here it is said that some Sauras with Divākara as their leader carrying red flowers in their hands met Śaṅkara at a place called Subrahmaṇya situated at a distance of fourteen days journey from Anantaśayana or Trivandrum. They described before him the excellence of the sun

<sup>1</sup>DHI, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

god. They quoted such Vedic passages as *Sūrya ātmā jagatastas-thūshaścha* (Sūrya is the soul of movable and immovable things) *asāvādityo Brahma* (That Āditya is Brahma), etc. and contended that it was Sūrya who was the cause of the world and the Supreme Soul. Their six subdivisions are briefly described by Ānandagiri thus : the first group worshipped the rising sun as *Brahmā*, the sole creator of the universe; the second adored the noon-day sun as *Rudra-Śiva*, the destroyer of the world; the third venerated the setting sun as *Vishṇu* as the creator, preserver and destroyer; the fourth combined all these aspects of the god; the fifth meditated on the golden coloured presiding deity of the solar orb; and the last performed the *Saura-vrata* consisting of fervently looking at the sun disc, offering ceremonial worship to the deity, dedicating all their works to the god, and breaking their fast after having seen the sun etc. All of them had the mark of the solar orb branded on their forehead, arms and chest with the help of a red hot iron style, and always concentrated their minds on the sun.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Foreign Influence on the Solar Cult : the Paurāṇika Evidence*

But the Indian solar cult was influenced, at least in North India, by Persian beliefs and practices from a very early date. It is proved by the various *Saura Purāṇas*, other texts such as the *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira, Scythian coins and a number of inscriptions. Of the numerous *Purāṇas* it is the *Sāmba P.* which deals principally with the cult of the sun. Another *Paurāṇika* text which is regarded as the *locus classicus* for our knowledge of the foreign influence on the solar cult of northern India<sup>2</sup> is the *Bhavishya P.* It gives an account of the origin of the cult, the solar deity and his associates, the mode of worship, the solar priests (*Bhojakas*, *Magas*, *Somakas*, etc.), and the solar festivals. Some material on sun worship is also found in the *Skanda*, *Matsya*, *Brahma*, *Varāha*, *Agni*, *Garuda*, *Vishṇudharmottara*, *Bhavishyottara* and *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas*. From the combined testimony of these sources it appears that a new form of sun-worship was introduced in India by the bands of the Magi priests who came from Śakadvīpa or Śākadvīpa, probably Siestan or Eastern or South-eastern Iran, in the wake of the

<sup>1</sup>*PTR*, p. 139 f.; cf. also Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 217 f.

<sup>2</sup>*PTR*, p. 140.

Śakas, Pahlavas and others, specially the Śakas. They called their deity Mithra or Mihira. They first established at a place called Mitravana on the banks of the Chandrabhāgā in the Punjab and built at this place a city called Mūlasthāna (mod. Multan) and a sun temple containing an image of their deity. But their conception of the sun god, the procedure of his worship, their manners and customs, all differed greatly from those of the adherents of the Vedic solar cult. Hence in order to modify the earlier solar cult by incorporating Magian elements and accord recognition to the Magas as full-fledged Brāhmaṇas, new chapters were incorporated into the *Sām̐ba*, *Bhavishya* and other Purāṇas.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Sām̐ba P.* Nārada, the irascible sage, was offended by Sām̐ba, the son of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. Thereupon Nārada caused Kṛṣṇa to curse Sām̐ba to become an ugly leper. When Sām̐ba pleaded innocent he was advised to appease Nārada who in turn advised him to worship the sun to get cured. At that time Nārada also described his own visit to Sūryaloka where he found the sun attended by the Yakshas, Gandharvas, etc., by the three Vedas, the sages, and the three Sandhyās, and by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and other gods. Consequently, Sām̐ba went to the great river Chandrabhāgā, and then to Mitravana, emaciated his body with fasts there and eulogised the sun who cured him of leprosy. The sun also advised Sām̐ba to establish a sun image on the bank of the Chandrabhāgā, at the place which was to become famous by the name Sām̐bapura. Sām̐ba found this image in the river Chandrabhāgā itself. After erecting a temple for the image Sām̐ba, at the advice of Nārada and the sun, brought eighteen families of the Magas from Śakadvīpa<sup>2</sup> to be its priests because the Brāhmaṇas of the Jambudvīpa had become degraded. The Magas of the Śakadvīpa were divided into four castes—Maga, Masaga,<sup>3</sup> Mānasa and Mandaga, corresponding to the four Varṇas of Jambudvīpa but having no mixed castes. They were

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, R.C., 'The Sām̐ba-Purāṇa, a Saura Work of Different Hands', *ABORI*, XXXVI, Pt. i-ii, 1955, p. 62 ff.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion on the problem whether this name is Śakadvīpa or Śākadvīpa, Vide Deb, B.C., 'Śākadvīpa', *ABORI*, XXXVI, Pt. iii-iv, 1955, p. 358 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Probably identical with the Massagetæ mentioned by Herodotus (cf. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 70, n. 2; Deb, B.C., 'Śākadvīpa', *ABORI*, XXXVI, Pt. iii-iv 1955, p. 360).



borne of the *tejas* of the sun, wore *avyaṅgas* and had the four Vedas given to them by the sun.

This story of Sāmba forms the nucleus of the *Sāmba P.* In connection with it a few subsidiary stories have been introduced which glorify the sun and throw light on his family.<sup>1</sup> For instance there are the stories of the penance of Saṁjñā, the wife of the sun in the Uttarakuru country because she could not tolerate the brilliance of her husband and left him after creating another woman Chbāyā (her own shadow) to take her place; of the birth of the various sons and daughters to the sun-god; of Viśvakarmā's paring of the sun's rays by means of a lathe; of the establishment of sun's image in sun's *tapovana* on the shore of the salt ocean etc.

According to the *Bhavishya P.*, however, the temple of the god was erected by Sāmba at Mūlasthānapura (modern Multan). As no local Brāhmaṇa would or could serve there, on the advice of Gauramukha, the priest of Ugrasena, Sāmba brought the Magas, the special worshippers of the sun, from Śakadvīpa and entrusted them the task of officiating as priests in the temple, as a result of which he got cured.

The *Bhavishya P.* also gives us an imaginary account of the origin of the Magas. A son named Jaraśabda or Jaraśasta (obviously Zoroaster) was born to Nikshubhā, the daughter of Sujihvā, a Śakadvīpī Brāhmaṇa of the Mihira gotra, through the sun-god. This Jaraśabda-Jaraśasta was the ancestor of the Magas who worshipped the sun-god, their original progenitor. They used to wear the sacred girdle called *avyaṅga* on their waist.

The worship of the sun as Mithra was prevalent in Iran from very early times. Herodotus refers to a belief among the Persians that if a sin is committed by someone against the sun god, he is attacked with leprosy, and can be cured of it only after the proper propitiation of the god. The prevalence of such a belief in India is evidenced by the instance of Mayūra, the author of the poem *Sūryaśataka*. The name Maga is the Indian adaption of the Magii, the sun-worshipping priests of Iran, and *avyaṅga* is nothing but the Indian form of *aivyaonghen*, the sacred waist-girdle worn by them. In the description of the sun image given in

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Arora, R.K., *Historical and Cultural Data from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, Delhi, 1972, p. 66 ff.

the *Bṛhatsamhitā*, it is expressly laid down that it should not only be shown wearing a northerner's dress (*udichyaveśa*)—a close fitting cloak or tunic (*kañchukaguptaḥ*), covered with (boots) from the foot reaching upto the thigh (*gūḍham pādād ūru yāvat*)<sup>1</sup>—but should also be wearing a *viyaṅga* (a variant of *avyaṅga*). According to Varāhamihira, it was the Magas who were the proper persons to install the image of the Sun (*Magāṁścha Savituḥ . . . kāryā kriyā*).<sup>2</sup> Varāhamihira was probably himself a Maga Brāhmaṇa for Utpala described him as Āvantikāchārya, Arkalabdhavaraprasāda, and Magadhadvija—the last epithet, when taken alongwith the others, obviously being a scribal error or misprint for Magadvija.<sup>3</sup>

The existence of the Magas in India<sup>4</sup> is noticed by quite early authorities. Ptolemy says in his *Geographicon* (BK. VII, section 74) that there were Maga Brāhmaṇas (Brachmanoi Magoi) in India, and they lived in a town named Brachme. Alberuni also informs us that the Hindus of Multan used to celebrate a festival named Sāmbapurayātrā before the image of the sun every year. According to his evidence, the Magii, who settled in India, were known by the name of Maga. A stone inscription of the Śaka year 1059 (=1137-38 A.D.) found at Govindapur (Gaya District, Bihar)<sup>5</sup> records in its opening verses that the Magas descended from the sun-god and were brought into India by Śāmba (*Śāmba yānānināya*) from the Śakadvīpa. The author of the inscription was the poet Gaṅgādhara who belonged to a line of Maga Brāhmaṇas settled in the region.

<sup>1</sup>The actual reading is *gūḍham pādāduroyāvat* meaning 'covered with boots from the foot upto the chest'. It has been rightly corrected by B.C. Deb as *gūḍham pādād ūru yāvat*.

<sup>2</sup>Deb, B.C., *op. cit.*, p. 361.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* D.K. Biswas suggests the same (*IHQ*, 1949, pp. 175-83).

<sup>4</sup>According to V.C. Srivastava a wave of the Magas had entered India as early as the 5th cent. B.C. (*op. cit.*, p. 244 f.), though its influence was limited. Cf. also his 'Antiquity of Magas in Ancient India', *PIHC*, 1968, pp. 86-94. Also see Das, T.C., 'The Sun Worship in Ancient India', *AIOC*, II. For a detailed study of the Magas in India vide, Arora, R.K., *Historical and Cultural Data in the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, Delhi, 1972, Ch. II.

<sup>5</sup>*EI*, II, p. 330.

*Foreign Elements in Solar Iconography*

The evidence of the *Brhatsamhitā* about the foreign elements in the iconography of the sun image is also supported by other texts. The *Viṣṇudharmottara* says that the god should have four arms, should be covered with a coat of mail and should wear a Northern's dress and the waist girdle known as *yavīyāṅga* (*avayaṅga*). Other North Indian texts also refer to the *udīchyaveśa*, *avyaṅga* and boots (*upānatpinaddha pāda yugalam*) of the sun.<sup>1</sup>

Actual solar images found from the various parts of North India are consonant with the literary tradition. In the Śaka-Kushāṇa period Gandhāra and Mathurā regions appear to have been the main centres of the foreign influence on solar cult, for many Sūrya images wearing tunic and boots have been found there.<sup>2</sup> A small figure of boot-wearing Sūrya in black slate found in Gandhāra shows the god seated on a chariot drawn by four horses and attended by two female figures.<sup>3</sup> The dress of the Sūrya reliefs found from Niyamatpur and Kumarpur (Bangladesh) as well from the Bhumara Śiva temple (c. 6th century A.D.)<sup>4</sup> very strikingly resembles that of the Kushāṇa kings like Wema Kadphises and Kanishka shown on their coins and sculptures. The heavy coat and boots of the early Sūrya figures in imitation of those of the Kushāṇa kings are evidently described by Varāhamihira as *udīchyaveśam gūḍham pādādūruyāvat* (northerner's dress covering the body from the legs to the thigh).<sup>5</sup>

The iconographic representation of Sūrya came to be far more elaborate in course of time. The figures of several spouses of the god, such as Nikshubhā, Chhāyā, Samjñā or Rājñī, Suvarṇā and Suvarchasā, with the goddess Mahāśvetā and other attendants are now depicted crowding round the main deity. Several medieval sculptures of eastern India show Revanta, the

<sup>1</sup>*DHI*, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *AIU*, p. 466. For the probable connection of the Śuṅga, Kanva and Hūṇa kings with Mitra(Mithra) worship see N.N. Basu, *Castes and Sects of Bengal*, IV, p. 56 f.

<sup>3</sup>*DHI*, p. 434.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 435.

<sup>5</sup>As pointed out by J.N. Banerjea (*DHI*, p. 431) Indian sun image did not have its prototype in the Iranian Mithra, as in Persia the tradition of making the image of the sun-god in anthropomorphic form did not exist. Therefore the foreign elements in the dress of the sun images must be regarded as Indian so far as their rendering in art is concerned.



son of Sūrya, with a drinking cup in his hand and accompanied by a host of followers.

### *The Sun Temples*

One of the earliest sun temples is said to have stood in the city of Takshaśilā at the time of Gondophernes (1st half of the 1st century A.D.) and it was visited by Apollonius of Tyana. Yuan Chwang gives a graphic description of the Multan sun temple in his *Si-yu-ki* : "Of the many temples of Multan, the large and beautiful sun temple was worthy of note: the golden image of the god was studded with precious stones; it was miracle-working, and its fame spread far and wide. The Danseuse (Devadāsī ?) used to sing and dance inside the temple; it was illumined throughout the night, and offerings of flowers, incense, etc., were made at all times. The Indian kings and potentates used to dedicate rich presents to the god, and caused to be built rest-houses and hospitals for pilgrims. Not less than 1000 pilgrims from different parts of the country used to congregate and pray there everyday. The temple precincts were charming, for it was surrounded by big tanks and beautiful gardens".<sup>1</sup> Yuan Chwang also refers to a splendid sun temples at Kanauj. The Arab geographers like Alberuni Abu Isak al Istakhri and Al Idrisi also write about the Multan temple, and the image enshrined there. Alberuni writes that "there is an image of the sun named Āditya at Multan. It is made of wood and covered with red skin; two rubies are set on its eyes. The prosperity of the town was mainly due to it, for pilgrims from various parts of India used to come to see it and offer it untold wealth".<sup>2</sup>

Inscriptions from the early medieval or even Gupta period onwards record the erection and maintenance of the temples of the sun mostly associated with this particular type of sun worship. The Mandasaur stone inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I records the erection of a magnificent sun temple in 416 A.D. by a band of silk weavers who came there from the Lāṭa Vishaya.<sup>3</sup> Some members of the guild were very much adept in the science of astrology which indicates their connection with this form of the

<sup>1</sup>Watters, *op. cit.*, II, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, pp. 116, 184.

<sup>3</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, p. 352 ff.

cult for the Daivajña-āchāryas, experts in astronomy and astrology, were regarded as descendants of the Magas. Bhojakas, another class of Maga Brāhmaṇas, are mentioned in the Deo-Baranark (Shahabad District, Bihar) pillar inscription of Jivitagupta II of the Later Gupta dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Burgess has recorded the discovery of many old sun temples datable from the Gupta period onwards from Multan to Kutch. Sankalia draws attention to the wide-spread prevalence of this form of the cult during the same period all over Gujarat on the basis of numerous inscriptions, and Sircar reports the existence of several early medieval sun temples at Bhilsa, Pushkara and Gayā.<sup>2</sup> The Mārtaṇḍa temple in Kashmir was most probably built by Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa in the middle of the 8th century A.D., who also built a temple of Āditya at Lāṭapur. The sun temple at Koṇārka was built in the 13th century A.D. by Lāṅguliya Narasiṃhadeva of the Gaṅga dynasty in the shape of a huge chariot on wheels in the Arkakshetra at Koṇārka.

#### *Maturity and Weakness of the Saura Sect*

Thus, in the Paurāṇika age the Saura cult is found in a quite mature sectarian form. In the Purāṇas the human form of the god has become more explicit and reference is made to the numerous *vratas* associated with his cult. The description in the *Mbh.* of the Sūryaloka by Nārada, the claim that the sun is the cause of the creation, protection and destruction of the world, invocation of the god in a sectarian fashion in the Indore copper plate of Skandagupta, Mandasaur inscription of Kumāragupta I, Khoh inscription of Śarvanātha etc., the assumption of the title Paramādityabhakta or Paramasaura by Vardhana, Maitraka and Pratihāra rulers, the composition of the work like the *Sūryaśataka* of Mayūra and of the sectarian Saura Purāṇas—all these indicate to the maturity of solar sectarianism.

However, despite the fact that the worship of the sun assumed maturer and devotional character in the epic-Paurāṇika age and was strengthened by foreign influences and probably received special patronage of some rulers as well, it did not become as popular as the other main Paurāṇika sects were, most likely because Viṣṇu,

<sup>1</sup>Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 213ff.

<sup>2</sup>*PTR*, p. 143, n. 32a.

another solar god, had already attracted the masses and physical sun, always visible to the naked eye, was an obstacle in the conception of Sūrya as a 'human' divinity. In the South the Śakadvīpī form of solar worship did not make any headway. "The South Indian figures of Sūrya have the legs and feet always left bare, and instead of the long coat of North India we find him invariably wearing the *Udarabandha*. There are other minor differences too which grew, and brought the differences into still sharper relief in the medieval age." The orthodox tradition of the South developed "on the lines of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* prescription of a golden disc to represent the solar orb and the Upanishadic doctrine of the golden Purusha in the Sun and the philosophically inclined thought less of the "all-red" deity and more of Brahman as the Ultimate Being with which the Sun was identified".<sup>1</sup> Actually in the South the solar cult in general also did not flourish much<sup>2</sup> and Gopinatha Rao even thinks it curious to find a sun temple (*Mārtaṇḍālaya*) in the South Indian village of Sūryanarkoyil built during the region of Kulottuṅga (1070-1120 A.D.) in the Tanjore District.

In the North also the Sauras never became a rival of the Vaishnavas, Śaivas and Śāktas. Though the Smārta Pañchopāsaka Hindus continued to worship the sun, yet as pointed out by Banerjea, no distinct school of philosophy grew up round him.<sup>3</sup> The early Maga immigrants were merged in course of time in the vast Indian population, only partially maintaining their individual entity by forming a separate caste, which include the Daivajñas, Grahaviṣṭas, and Agradānis (those who were given precedence in the presentation of food and gifts in times of Śrāddha ceremonies). Some of them took to the profession of preparing horoscopes, while others officiated as priests especially for the performance of grahapūjā (Grahacharyās).<sup>4</sup>

#### *Dvādaśādityas, Revanta and Navagrahas*

With the worship of the sun is connected the worship of twelve Ādityas, Revanta, Navagrahas etc. Dvādaśādityas (*supra*, p. 328) are

<sup>1</sup>CA, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup>One of the tutelary deities of the Śālaṅkāyanas of Andhra was the sun (Chitraratha).

<sup>3</sup>PTR, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. PTR, p. 145f.; Deb, B.C., *op. cit.*, p. 364 f.



variously enumerated in the different texts. The *Vishṇudharmottara* says that the twelve Ādityas should be given the form of Sūrya. Separate images of the Ādityas are quite rare. They are usually shown on the detached frames or on the *prabhāvalī* of the Sūrya images.

Sūrya is credited with several sons including Yama, the Aśvins, Manu and Revanta. The *Kālikā P.* says that Revanta should be worshipped either in an image or a water-vessel. The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* and the *Vishṇudharmottara* state that the Lord Revanta should be shown on the horseback.

The worship of Navagrahas was and is still popular. Ravi, Soma, Maṅgala, Budha, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Śani, Rāhu and Ketu are the Navagrahas. Barring the first two and the last two the rest are all 'planets'. Alongwith the Ādityas their worship came to occupy a very important position in the Paurāṇika religion. The Navagrahas were worshipped by all to avert danger arising out of the anger of these 'gods', and so their images were in great demand. The particular ceremony was known by the name of *grahayāga* or *svastyāyana*. The word *graha* does not occur in this sense in the Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇa texts, Āraṇyakas, Upanishads and Epics. The *Mbh.* and the *Rāmā.* mention five grahas only rarely, usually without naming them. It is only in some Smṛti texts and specially in the Purāṇas that rules are laid down for the performance of the *grahayāga*. The *Matsya*, *Agni* and a few other Purāṇas as well as the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* refer to such rules in detail and give the names of the nine in correct order. The reliefs of the Navagrahas were almost invariably carved on the architraves of the main sanctum of the medieval shrines of different cult deities or on the *prabhāvalī* of the cult images. According to J.N. Banerjea in Orissa the number of the grahas on the temple-reliefs of the Bhauma-Kara period is eight (Ketu being absent), while those in the later shrines of the Gaṅga age always come up to nine, including Ketu. In a fragmentary relief of the late Gupta period also, now in the collection of the Sarnath Museum, Ketu does not appear.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>DHI, p. 144.

## Chapter 14

# Ganapati and the Ganapatya Sect

### Introduction

In the Hindu religious ceremonies the first god to be invoked is Gaṇeśa, also known as Gaṇānana or Vināyaka (*āḍau pūjyo Vināyakah*). Even in homage paid to other gods his name is always placed first. He is regarded as the remover of difficulties (*vighnahara*), giver of success and prosperity in life (*ṛddhi-siddhi-dātā*) and is also the symbol of confidence and intelligence. The later Paurāṇika mythology makes him the son of Śiva and Pārvatī and assigns him the leadership of the impish attendants (*Gaṇas* or *Pramathas*) of Rudra-Śiva. In the Purāṇas as well as in the countless image found throughout India, he is generally depicted as a pot-bellied elephant-headed god with one tusk (*ekadanta*) riding on or attended by a rat (*mūshaka*). He has four hands which hold a shell, discus, club and sweetmeat (*modaka*). In Maharashtra Śārādā is regarded as his wife. In the South, however, he is conceived as a celibate.

The concept of rat as the *vāhana* of Gaṇeśa is quite intriguing.<sup>1</sup> According to S.K. Gupta the factor which associated the rat with Gaṇeśa "may be traced in the character of the creature itself. It is the destroying habit of the rat which brought the animal in contact with Gaṇeśa, the Vighnarāja, and turned it into his mount. The rat or mouse was a constant problem in ancient times in villages, towns and in agricultural fields. . . . Therefore,

<sup>1</sup>For the various theories on the association of rat with Gaṇeśa see Foucher in Getty's *Geṇeśa* (p. xxiii); Zimmer, Heinrich, *The Art of Asia*, New York, 1955, I, p. 47; Frazer, J.G., *The Golden Bough*, p. 696; Gupte, B.A., 'Harvest Festivals in Honour of Gaurī and Gaṇeśa', *IA*, XXXV, 1906, p. 63.

it was considered to be a source of *vighna* (trouble). Hence the idea that rat is the *vāhana* of Gaṇeśa".<sup>1</sup>

### *Gāṇapatya Literature*

Though material concerning the worship of Gaṇeśa has been traced by orthodox scholars even in the Vedic Saṁhitās, but mostly it is the various Purāṇas which furnish detailed stories and myths about him. Two Mahāpurāṇas, the *Brahma* and the *Brahmāṇḍa*, and two Upapurāṇas, the *Gaṇeśa* and the *Maudgala*, deal with all the aspects of his greatness and glory. The other Purāṇas like the *Brahmavaivartta*, *Liṅga*, *Matsya*, *Nārada*, *Śiva*, etc. too mention his origin and greatness. Of these texts the *Gaṇeśa P.* and the *Maudgala P.* are the most important.

Chronologically the *Gaṇeśa P.* is later than the Mahāpurāṇas. At the commencement of the *Gaṇeśa P.* mention is made of the 18 Mahāpurāṇas. Some lists do not mention the *Gaṇeśa P.* even as an Upapurāṇa. However, the *Gaṇeśa P.* is one the most important texts for the Gāṇapatyas not only because it deals with the Gaṇeśa worship in detail but also because it contains the *Gaṇeśagītā*, a text of eleven chapters and 414 verses mostly in *anushṭubh* metre. It is a short and interesting religio-philosophical treatise, one of the numerous 'gītāgranthas' in Sanskrit literature. It describes the philosophical aspect of Gaṇeśa worship in detail. Some later Upanishads such as the *Gāṇapatyatharvaśīrsha Upa.* also deal with the philosophy and symbolism of Gaṇeśa worship.

### *Antiquity of Gaṇeśa Worship*

The problem of the antiquity of Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god, may be studied with reference to three points: the antiquity of elephant worship, the antiquity of the worship of Gaṇeśa as the elephant-headed god and the antiquity of the Gāṇapatyas as a sect. As regards the first point, according to S.K. Chatterji philological evidence suggests that an elephant god was worshipped by the pre-Aryan races of India;<sup>2</sup> and he seems to be right. So far as the worship of Gaṇeśa the elephant-headed deity is concerned, it emerged quite late among the Aryans. It could not have been

<sup>1</sup>Gupta, S.K., *Elephant in Indian Art and Culture*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 58 f.

<sup>2</sup>Chatterji, S.K., *Bhāratīya Ārya Bhāṣhā aurā Hindī*, Bombay, 1954; cf. Sampurnananda, *Gaṇeśa*.



an imported concept because elephants are not found in the region from where the Aryans came into this country. The name Gaṇapati occurs in the *RV* (II. 2. 23), but it does not mean in this context the Paurāṇika god Gaṇeśa. In the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* of the *Śukla Yajurveda* the word *gaṇapati* occurs with *nidhipati* and *priyapati*. The whole extract (23.19) reads : *Gaṇānām tvā Gaṇapatiṁ havāmahe priyāṇām tvā priyapatiṁ havāmahe nidhinām tvā nidhipatiṁ havāmahe vaso mama/ Āhamajāni garbhadamātvamajāsi garbhadham*. But as pointed out by J.N. Banerjea the context in which this invocation occurs shows that all the three epithets – *gaṇapati*, *priyapati* and *nidhipati* are addressed to the horse, killed in the Aśvamedha, by the chief-queen when she lies down with the dead horse under cover. The *Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitā* of the *Kṛshṇa Yajurveda* not only quotes the identical passage, but also adds a few words which show that the chief-queen of the ruler performing the Aśvamedha was desirous of virile and powerful sons and this part of the sacrifice where the mantra is uttered was thought necessary for the fulfilment of her desire. Thus, there can be no question of finding in *gaṇapati* and *nidhipati* of the Vedic text even the slightest reference to the Paurāṇika gods Gaṇeśa and Kubera.<sup>1</sup>

There is no mention of elephant-headed Gaṇapati and his worshippers in the *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the early Purāṇas and any inscription till the end of the Gupta age. The word Āmbika occurs in the *Saundarananda* of Aśvaghosha (1st cent. A.D.) but it does not necessarily indicate Gaṇeśa. The story given in the introduction of the *Mbh.* about Gaṇeśa having served as the amenuensis of Vyāsa while the latter was composing the Great Epic has been unanimously accepted as a late interpolation.<sup>2</sup> The Nanaghat inscription of Nāganikā, the Sātavāhana queen (first century B.C.), refers to the gods of quarters, Saṅkarshaṇa, Vāsudeva, etc. but does not mention Gaṇeśa. Coomaraswamy is inclined to look upon an image of one of the Amarāvati railings, which probably belongs to the beginning of the Christian era, as a transitional form of Gaṇeśa.<sup>3</sup> But

<sup>1</sup>DHI, p. 575.

<sup>2</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 151; cf. Sharma, B.R., 'Gaṇapati in the Epics', *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, XXXV, 1975, pp. 1-12.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Gupta, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 57.

according to Getty though the head of this image, including the eyes, ears and lower lips, is unquestionably that of elephant, the image has neither trunk nor tusk.<sup>1</sup> It, therefore, cannot be confidently asserted that it is really a prototype of Gaṇeśa. It seems that Gaṇeśa's image with all his *lakṣaṇas* did not take form before the Gupta period, though a deity with elephant face was probably known earlier. In the chapter on Pratimālakṣhaṇa in the *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira the iconographic description of the god occurs last in one or two manuscripts. It was regarded by Kern as an interpolation<sup>2</sup> who did not include it in his edition of the *Bṛhatsamhitā* on account of its suspect nature. All these facts led R.G. Bhandarkar to the conclusion that the worship of Gaṇeśa, son of Durgā-Pārvatī, originated after the late Gupta period.<sup>3</sup> However, according to J.N. Banerjea the reliefs depicting the elephant-headed and pot-bellied divinity undoubtedly go back to the early Gupta age, if not earlier still.<sup>4</sup> Coomaraswamy also refers to an image of sixth century from Bhumara. In this image Gaṇeśa appears with his four arms and a divine consort.<sup>5</sup>

As regards the antiquity of the Gāṇapatya sect, Varāhamihira in his enumeration of the Paurāṇika sects does not include the name of the Gāṇapatyas. No other early literary data about its existence is available. However, in some texts of a comparatively late date the sect is included in the list of the Pañchapūjakas<sup>6</sup>.

### *Evolution of the Various Facets of the Personality of Gaṇeśa*

Owing to the paucity of textual references, it is not possible to trace in detail the various stages of the development of the personality of Gaṇeśa. Crooke saw in Gaṇeśa a Dravidian solar God.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>*PTR*, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Bhandarkar, *VSMR*, p. 214.

<sup>4</sup>Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 354, n. 1. According to D.C. Sircar (*EI*, XXXV, p. 46) the antiquity of Gaṇeśa goes back to 3rd or 4th century A.D. Cf. also *IHQ*, XIX, p. 14, n. 7; Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 206-7.

<sup>5</sup>Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>*Ādityam Gaṇanātham cha Devīm Rudram cha Keśavam |  
Pañchadaivatamityuktam sarva karmasu pūjayet ||*

<sup>7</sup>Crooke, W., *Popular Religions and Folklore of Northern India*, London, 1896, p. 287.

He was supported by De Gubernatis who also suggested that the rat symbolises night or darkness which the sun destroys.<sup>1</sup> Monier-Williams placed Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya at the head of the tutelary village divinities (*grāma-devatās*) who guard the household and control good and evil deeds. Such speculations apart, the origin and development of the personality of Gāṇeśa may best be understood with reference to his name, physical features and the ideas he represents—that is the appellative, physical and conceptual aspects of his personality.

### *Gaṇeśa: the Śiva Element*

In the *Amarakośha*, usually assigned to the Gupta period, the synonyms of Gaṇapati-Vināyaka are given thus:

*Vināyako-Vighnarāja-Dvaimātura-Gaṇādhipāḥ |*  
*Apyekadanta-Heramba-Lambodara-Gajānanāḥ. //*<sup>2</sup>

The literal meaning of Gaṇeśa or Gaṇapati is 'the leader of the Gaṇas' who are almost invariably associated with Śiva. Rudra, the Vedic counterpart of Śiva, has been associated with Marut-gaṇas. It is true that Gaṇeśvara also occurs as one of the names of Viṣṇu among the one thousand names of the god (*Viṣṇusahasranāma*) given in the Anuśāsanaparvan of the *Mbh.*, but as some appellations of Śiva are undoubtedly used in this stotra for Viṣṇu, it may easily be surmised that the title Gaṇeśvara was also taken from the Śaiva mythology. From these facts emerges the possibility that originally Gaṇeśa was merely another aspect of Śiva which in course of time was separately deified. The Vedic tradition recorded in the Trayambaka Homa of the *YV* and the *Taittirīya* and *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇas*, which assign *mūshaka* or rat

<sup>1</sup>Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, p. 68 (Quoted by S. K. Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 55).

<sup>2</sup>Most of these names are self-explanatory. Heramba means a buffalo. It indirectly connects Gaṇeśa with Yama who rides a buffalo and with Pārvatī-Durgā who killed a buffalo-demon. Cf. S. Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 184, n. 1. Dvaimātūra means 'son of two mothers'—probably of Pārvatī and Gaṅgā. 'Lambodara' means pot-bellied. In Hindu iconography pot-belly evokes 'the lower gods' while 'high gods' are usually described as *simha kaṭi* (lion-waisted). Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa is also described iconographically as pot-bellied. The very word Kubera, literally means an ugly body—*Ku* meaning ugly and *bera* meaning body or *tanu*.



to Rudra as his *vāhana*<sup>1</sup>, also points to this possibility. The elephant head of Gaṇeśa may also be explained by referring to the animal faces of the Mahāparishadas of Rudra as described in the Skandābhisheka chapter of the Śalyaparvan of the *Mbh.* These parishadas (gaṇas), who are described in this context as so many attendants of Skanda, bear the faces of various animals and birds such as tortoise, cock, crow, owl, parrot, falcon, dog, fox, boar, elephant, lion, etc. In the Śiva temple of Bhumara (c. 6th century A.D.) are depicted the figures of many gaṇas with faces of various animals and birds on its walls.

Some other links of Gaṇeśa with Śiva may here be pointed out. His name Gajānana recalls Śiva killing the elephant demon Gajāsura and the appellation Nṛtyagaṇapati connects Gaṇeśa with Śiva Naṭarāja and his dancing hosts. In the *Atharvaśirsha Upanishad* mention is made of Vināyaka among the many gods or spirits with whom Rudra is identified, and Vināyaka is one of the names of Gaṇeśa in the Purāṇas.

The iconography of Gaṇeśa also links him with the gods of the Śiva complex. For example among the earliest Gaṇeśa images is included an image found near Kabul. It contains an inscription in the script of sixth-seventh century A.D. stating that this image of Mahāvināyaka was installed by Shāhi Khiṅgala. The four hands, tusk and trunk of the image are now broken but it depicts a snake as a *yajñopavīta* and tiger's head on its undergarment (to suggest that the deity is wearing tiger skin). The god is depicted as ūrdhvamedha. All these features of Gaṇeśa iconography are found in Śiva images also.<sup>2</sup>

### *Gaṇeśa : the Vināyaka Element*

R.G. Bhandarkar traces the beginning of Gaṇeśa worship to the veneration paid by the ancient Indians to 'imps and evil spirits' collectively described as Vināyakas in the *Mānava Gṛhyasūtra*,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Yaduvamsi, *Śaiva Mata*, pp. 14, 18.

<sup>2</sup>*El*, XXXV, p. 46. For the connection of Gaṇeśa with the cult of Mother Goddess, cf. Dange, Sadasiva A., 'The Birth of Gaṇapati', in *Aruṇa Bhārati* ed. by B. Datta, pp. 1-7. Dange believes that *sindūra* and red garments of Gaṇeśa and the dirt of his mother are nothing but mythical superimposition to indicate his birth from mother earth.

*Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, *Mbh.*, the *Agni*, *Brahma* and the *Varāha P.* etc. In the *Anuśāsanaparvan* of the *Mbh.* Gaṇeśvaras and Vināyakas are described alongwith other gods as the lords of all the worlds (*Īsvaraḥ Sarvalokānām Gaṇeśvara-Vināyakāḥ*), and, properly propitiated, they remove all obstacles from the path of men. They are prone to possess men and women, make them failures in life and put obstacles in their performance of good deeds. Men possessed by them are faced with all sorts of evils and frustrations. Many purificatory ceremonies are enjoined to be performed for getting rid of their influence and attaining success. According to the *Mānava Gṛhyasūtra* (II.14) Vināyakas are four in number. Their names are (1) Śālakaṭaṅkaṭa, (2) Kushmāṇḍarāja-putra (3) Ushmita and (4) Devayajana. The text also describes a ceremony which frees persons haunted by the Vināyakas. Yājñavalkya in his *Smṛti* (I.27 ff.) describes the same ceremony but in a somewhat more developed and complicated form. It clearly asserts that Rudra appointed one Vināyaka with six different aspects or forms (Mita, Sammita, Śāla, Kaṭaṅkaṭa, Ushmita and Devayajana) as the leader of his Gaṇas, and that Vināyaka was the son of Ambikā (Ambikāputra). The difference between the two texts shows that during the period that elapsed between the composition of the *Sūtra* and that of the *Smṛti*, the four Vināyakas had become one, Gaṇapati-Vināyaka, who had Ambikā for his mother. It will also be seen that in his own nature this god was conceived as an unfriendly or malignant spirit, but capable of being made friendly and benignant (*Vighnavināśana* and *Siddhidātā*) by propitiatory rites. In this respect he resembled Rudra himself. That the worship of Vināyakas had come into existence before the Christian era is proved by the occurrence of the ceremony mentioned above in a *Gṛhyasūtra*. But the concept of one Gaṇapati-Vināyaka, the son of Ambikā, was obviously introduced into the Hindu pantheon much later.

#### *Gaṇeśa : Bṛhaspati-Brahmaṇaspati Element*

As noted above the name Gaṇapati alone occurring in some *Saṃhitā*, texts would not prove any allusion to the Paurāṇika Gaṇeśa in these works. The adjective gaṇapati was used also for the Vedic gods Bṛhaspati and Brahmaṇaspati, who were different from the Paurāṇika Gaṇeśa-Gaṇapati. But a deliberate identification was

made much later when the orthodox tradition sought to establish Vedic antecedents of Gaṇapati-Gaṇeśa with the help of such passages.<sup>1</sup> According to Rao, the reputation of Gaṇeśa as a god of wisdom was the result of a confusion between Gaṇeśa and the Vedic god Brahmanaspati<sup>2</sup> while R.G. Bhandarkar identifies him with the celestial guru Bṛhaspati himself.<sup>3</sup> In any case this reputation seems to have been at the root of the legend about Gaṇeśa serving as the scribe of Vyāsa at the suggestion of Brahmā (*Mbh.*, Ādiparvan). It is said that Gaṇeśa did not appreciate the idea of serving as Vyāsa's scribe. Therefore, he put the condition that he would write down the poem provided Vyāsa dictated it in such a manner that he had not to lay down his pen even once before the task was completed. To this Vyāsa put the counter-condition that he would dictate without pause provided Gaṇapati wrote down every verse only when he had understood its meaning. As P.C. Bagchi suggests, it may be that Gaṇeśa was associated with writing, because of a confusion regarding the word 'siddhi'. From very ancient times, the Hindu alphabet was called 'Siddham' and enumeration of the alphabet began with the word *Siddhi*. As one of the epithets of Gaṇeśa is *Siddhidātā*, Bagchi thinks it probable that his association with the word gave rise to the legend of his serving as a scribe.

In the South Indian version of the *Mbh.* there is no mention of this legend or of Gaṇeśa. No ancient fresco or sculpture depicts him as a scribe.<sup>4</sup> However, Getty mentions two such paintings—one Nepalese and the other Rajput. The Nepalese painting is in a text name *Gāyatrī Tantra* which is supposed to be a dictation of mantras to Gaṇeśa by his father Śiva.<sup>5</sup> According to some scholars the legend of Gaṇeśa's scribehood was incorporated in the North Indian version of the *Mbh.* in the middle of the eleventh century though Winternitz believes that it was known long before the ninth century A.D.

Here we may refer to another legend concerning Gaṇeśa's intelligence. According to it Śiva conducted a test for his sons,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Kalyāṇa*, Śrī Gaṇeśaṅka.

<sup>2</sup>Gupta, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>*VSMR*, p. 212; cf. Sinha, B.C., *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, Ch. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Gupta, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*



Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. Śiva and Pārvatī told them that he who returned first after going round the whole world would be married first. Accordingly Kārttikeya mounted on his *vāhana* peacock and set out for a tour round the world. Gaṇeśa did nothing of the sort. After a while he only went round his parents explaining that since the whole universe existed in his parents, Śiva and Pārvatī, going round them tantamounted to touring round the world. Needless to state that it was Gaṇeśa who won the competition.

### *Gaṇeśa : Yaksha-Nāga (Elephant) Elements*

The most prominent physical feature of Gaṇeśa is his elephant-head and, therefore, originally he must have been associated with the elephant cult. His divine personality fails to conceal his animal origin. The rope of binding the elephant i.e. *pāśa* and the instrument for goading the same i.e. *aṅkuśa*, which are often wielded by Gaṇeśa suggest that the deity was formerly worshipped to protect the devotees from any harm that might come from wild elephants. Most likely the worship of the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa arose in regions infested with wild elephants. The belief in the extraordinary intelligence of Gaṇeśa is easily related with his elephant head for elephant is also popularly believed to have human qualities and intelligence.

Another explanation of the characteristic physical appearance of Gaṇapati may be sought in the fact that he combined in him some of the characteristic traits of both the Yakshas and the Nāgas. Coomaraswamy pointed out long ago that Gaṇeśa was undoubtedly a Yaksha-type, and an elephant-headed Yaksha is to be found in an Amarāvati coping. Gaṇeśa possesses the head of a Nāga in the sense of an elephant ('nāga' means a snake as well as an elephant). His potbelly (*tunḍila*) is also a characteristic which he shares with the Yakshas. It resembles a pitcher, 'containing all prosperity'. It is believed that he may fulfil all the desires. Although he is not included in any of the lists of Yakshas, yet he may be equivalent to Kubera or Maṇibhadra.

### *Stories of the Birth of Gaṇeśa*

The different Purāṇas like the *Śiva*, *Linga*, *Varāha*, *Skanda*, *Brahmavaivartta*, etc., and the Āgamas like the *Suprabhedāgama* give different accounts of the birth of Gaṇeśa. T.A. Gopinatha

Rao has collected a good many stories on this topic from these texts in which the god is said to have been born solely to Śiva, solely to Pārvatī, and to both Śiva and Pārvatī and also held to be Kṛṣṇa in another form.<sup>1</sup> These stories reflect the attempts of the later mythologists to bring this cult-god in line with the more important cult deities, Śiva and Śakti, of much earlier origin.

According to one legend, once Śiva and Pārvatī assumed elephant forms and wandered over hills and dales for ages, experiencing the delights of animal life. Therefore, they are known as Mātāṅga and Mātāṅgī. Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed deity, is the offspring born during this period of their love life.<sup>2</sup> According to another legend contained in the *Padma P.* Gaṇeśa is the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, or rather of the latter, for he was produced from the unguents with which the goddess had anointed herself. He had four arms and five elephant heads. Śiva declared him to be the son of Pārvatī. He reduced his five heads to one and enthroned him on Añjanagiri as the 'remover of obstacles'.

According to the *Līṅga Purāṇa* Gaṇeśa was born as the elephant-headed god from the womb of Pārvatī, while according to the *Vāmana P.* he was born from the sweat of Śiva and Pārvatī and was given the name of Vināyaka because Pārvatī created him without a husband (*vinā nāyakena*).

According to the *Brahmavaivartta P.* when Śiva and Pārvatī were making love, Viṣṇu took the form of a thirsty Brāhmaṇa. Śiva arose, and his seed fell on the bed instead in the womb of his wife. However, Śiva and Pārvatī offered the Brāhmaṇa food and water. Thereupon the Brāhmaṇa vanished and took the form of a child and went to Pārvatī's bed. There he became mixed with the seed of Śiva. Pārvatī found the child, nursed him and gave him the name of Gaṇeśa. Later it is said that the head of Gaṇeśa fell off when Pārvatī, in her pride, invited the planet Śani to look at her baby. Viṣṇu afterwards revived him with the head of an elephant. The *Śiva P.* seeks to explain Gaṇeśa's epithet *Gajānana*. It narrates that when bathing Pārvatī created Gaṇeśa from her sweat and appointed him to guard her apartment. But when Gaṇeśa refused to let Śiva enter the apartment the

<sup>1</sup>Gopinatha Rao, T.A., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, I, p. 35-46.

<sup>2</sup>Gupta, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 56.

enraged husband summoned one of his gaṇas who decapitated Gaṇeśa. Finally Śiva had to appeal to 'the gods of the north' to make good Gaṇeśa's loss with the head of the first animal they encountered. This happened to be an elephant and hence Gaṇeśa's elephant head.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Sect and Sub-sects of the Gāṇapatyas*

The sect of the Gāṇapatyas came to have as many as six subdivisions. One has to cull information about them from *Śaṅkara-digvijaya* of Ānandagiri, also called Anantānandagiri, and from the commentary called *Diṇḍima* by Dhanapati on the corresponding work of Mādhava.<sup>2</sup> These texts are of late medieval period, and purport to give details about the encounter of the leaders of six sub-sects of the Gāṇapatyas with Śaṅkara. These six sub-sects respectively worshipped Mahā-, Haridrā-, Uchchhishta-, Navanīta-, Svarṇa-, and Santāna- Gaṇapati and were led respectively by Girijāsuta, Gaṇapatikumāra, Herambasuta and three others. Śaṅkara defeated them all one after another at a place called Gaṇavara on the bank of the river Kaumudī. Before they were defeated each of them extolled the greatness of the particular form of Gaṇapati he venerated and described it as the creator of the Brāhmaṇical triad, endowing it with their respective functions. According to them, that Gaṇeśa is the greatest god is mentioned even in the *Taittirīya Āranyaka—Om Vighnarājāya vidmahe vakratuṇḍāya dhīmahi tanno dantī prachodayāt*. J.N. Banerjea rightly believes that this was a very late interpolation in the *TĀ*, probably of the late Gupta or post-Gupta age.<sup>3</sup> Those who adored Mahā-gaṇapati had Girijāsuta as their leader. They regarded Mahā-gaṇapati as the one who alone remains when Brahmadeva and others have been destroyed at the time of dissolution and who by his own wonderful powers creates Brahmadeva and others. One

<sup>1</sup>For details vide *Kalyāṇa*, Śrī Gaṇeśaṅka, p. 198 ff. See Paul Courtwright, B., 'The Beheading of Gaṇeśa', *Purāṇa*, XXII, i, pp. 67-80.

<sup>2</sup>Bhandarkar, *VSMR*, p. 212 f.; Lakshminarasimha Sastri, S., 'Bhagavān Gaṇeśa in the Tradition of Bhagavān Śaṅkarāchārya', *Kalyāṇa Kalpataru*, 34, pt. 4, 1974, pp. 109-15.

<sup>3</sup>Supra; *PTR*, p. 154. Incidentally it shows that interpolations were made in later ages even in the Vedic texts.

who repeats the original mantra and meditates on Mahāgaṇapati, attains supreme bliss.

The worshippers of Haridrāgaṇapati were led by Gaṇapati-kumāra. They took their stand on *RV.* II.23.1, and interpreted this text to mean "We meditate on thee who art the leader of the group of Rudra, Viṣṇu, Brahman, Indra and others, and art the instructor of sages Bhṛgu, Guru, Śeṣa and others, the highest of all who know the sciences, the greatest lord of the Brāhmaṇas engaged in the creation of the world, i.e. adorned by Brahman and others in the work of creation and others".<sup>1</sup> They believed that Haridrāgaṇapati should be worshipped and meditated upon as being dressed in a yellow silken garment, bearing a yellow sacred thread, having four arms, three eyes, with his face suffused over by turmeric (*haridrā*) ointment, and holding a *pāśa*, an *aṅkuśa* and a *daṇḍa* in his hands. He who worships the god in this form, obtains emancipation. The worshipper of Haridrāgaṇapati should bear, on both of his arms, the marks of Gaṇapati's face and one tooth impressed by a heated iron stamp.<sup>2</sup>

Herambasuta, another leader of the Gāṇapatya sect, was the worshipper of Uchchhisṭagaṇapati. The followers of this sub-sect resorted to the left-handed path (*Vāmamārga*) which was set up obviously in imitation of the Kaula worship of Śakti. They described their god as three-eyed and four-armed (holding a noose, an elephant-goad and a club in three hands, and raising the fourth in the *abhaya mudrā*) seated on a mahāpīṭha with the tip of his trunk applied to a pot of strong wine and engaged in kissing and embracing his Śakti sitting on his left lap. They observed no distinction of caste and saṃskāras like marriage, allowed promiscuous intercourse and also the use of wine. They put on a red mark on forehead. All the ordinary ceremonies, such as twilight adorations (*sandhyāvandana*) were left by them to a man's choice.

The followers of the other three Gaṇapatīs—Navanīta, Svarṇa, and Santāna, worshipped their god, it is said, according to the Śruti. They argued that since Gaṇapati is adored in the beginning of every religious act, other gods are part of him. They regarded the whole world as Gaṇapati and worshipped him as such.

<sup>1</sup>Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 212.



R.G. Bhandarkar and J.N. Banerjea are rightly critical of the authenticity of this detailed account of the Gāṇapatyas and their six sub-divisions existing in the time of Śaṅkara. The Gāṇapatya sect was certainly there when Śaṅkara preached advaita philosophy, but it is doubtful whether it had attained so much elaboration by that time.

### *Iconography of Gaṇeśa*

Most of the iconographic texts, if not all, describing the general form of Gaṇapati characterise him as four-armed, the only exception being the *Brhatsaṃhitā* chapter (57) on Pratimālakṣhaṇa which describes the earliest variety of his image in this manner: 'The lord of the Pramathas (the same as the Gaṇas) should be elephant-faced, pot-bellied, holding a hatchet and a radish, and should have one tooth'. As maintained by Banerjea this no doubt is the description of a two armed image. Of course there is no mention here of a pot of sweet-meat (*modaka bhāṇḍa*) but the 'radish' or the bulbous root (*mūlakakanda*) which is mentioned here is the edible of an elephant. The peculiar trait of 'one tooth' (*eka viśāṇa*) noted here gave rise to the later explanatory myths.<sup>1</sup> The couplet enumerating the various synonyms of Gaṇapati in the *Amarakośha* also contains a reference to the one-tooth, elephant-head and pot-belly of the god (*Vināyaka - Vighnarāja - Dvaimātura - Gaṇādhipāḥ / Apyekadanta-Heramba-Lambodara-Gajānanāḥ*). The other texts like *Aṁśumadbhedāgama*, *Uttarakāṃikāgama*, *Suprabhedāgama*, *Vishṇudharmot-tara*, *Rūpamaṇḍana* etc. invariably endow the god with four hands, the attributes held by them being any four among the following, 'own tooth' (*svadanta*), wood-apple (*kapi'tha*), sweet-meat (*modaka*), elephant-goat (*aṅkuśa*), noose (*pāśa*), snake (*nāga*), rosary, lotus, etc. In these later texts, mouse is very often described as his mount, and his consorts are sometimes mentioned as Bhārati (another name of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning), Śrī (Lakshmī), Vighneśvarī, Buddhi and Kubuddhi. Other characteristic traits which can be gathered from these texts are his three eyes, his slightly bent (*abhaṅga*) or straight (*samabhaṅga*)

<sup>1</sup>DHI, p. 357.

pose when standing (*sthānaka*), tiger-skin garment (*vyāgracharmāmbāradhara*), and sacred thread made of a serpent (*vyālayajñopavīta*). Many are the iconographic varieties of the god described in the different texts under such names as Bīja-Gaṇapati, Bāla-Gaṇapati, Taruṇa-Gaṇapati, Vira-Vighneśa, Śakti-Gaṇeśa, Lakshmī-Gaṇeśa, Mahā-Gaṇeśa, Haridrā-Gaṇeśa, Unmatta-Vināyaka, Nṛtya-Gaṇapati, Uchchhishṭa-Gaṇapati, Heramba-Gaṇapati (with five heads and ten arms, seated on a roaring lion), Gaṇapati with Siddhi and Buddhi by his side, Gaṇeśa with Sapta-Mātṛkās etc.<sup>1</sup> Banerjea rightly points out that the names of the cult images of some of the sub-divisions of the Gāṇapatya sect can be recognised in this list, and some forms of the god like Śakti or Unmatta-Uchchhishṭa-Gaṇapati seem to be associated with the left-handed (*Vāmāchāra* or *Tāntrika*) variety of his worship. Only a few of the aforesaid forms are actually met with in the Gupta and post-Gupta medieval art, and they are thus of great interest.<sup>2</sup>

The two most popular features of the iconography of Gaṇeśa are his one tusk (*ekadanta*) and the turning direction of his trunk. The absence of his other tusk is explained in different texts differently. According to some it was lost in a battle between Śiva and Gaṇeśa and according to others the elephant-head which was put on his torso originally had only one tusk. In any case, according to canons he should be depicted with only one tusk (*ekadanta*) on the right side. But, as Getty has pointed out, there are some images which have the tusk on the left side or have both the tusks.<sup>3</sup> The god is even found as having three tusks which however is a most unusual occurrence. The direction of his trunk is regarded more important in South India. There, when it turns to the left, he is called Idamburi and when it turns to the right, he is called Valamburi.<sup>4</sup>

### *Philosophy of the Gāṇapatya Sect*

The best exposition of the philosophy of the Gāṇapatya sect is found in the *Gaṇeśagītā* which forms a part of the *Gaṇeśa P.* The

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *AIK*, p. 347 f.

<sup>2</sup>*DHI*, p. 358.

<sup>3</sup>Gupta, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

*Gaṇeśa P.* describes Gaṇeśa as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world, as Mahāvishṇu, Sadāśiva, Mahābrahmā and Mahāśakti. Vishṇu, Śiva, Brahmā all originate from Gaṇeśa. In its final colophon the *Gaṇeśagītā* is described as Yogāmṛtārtha Śāstra and it is in the form of a *saṁvāda* between Lord Gajānana and King Vareṇya who is blessed by the Lord and finds his liberation in the end. In many respects it is like the *Bhagavadgītā*. The eighth Chapter, entitled Viśvarūpadarśanam, almost resembles the eleventh Chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Like Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā* King Vareṇya is blessed by the Lord with Jñāna-chakshus or Divya-Chakshus and with them he beholds the Universal Vision which was seen only by Śuka, Sanaka and Nārada. In this work Lord Gaṇeśa assures the devotees that it is possible to see Him, know Him and become one with Him, through devotion only. Even an outcaste, who worships Him with piety and devotion, becomes superior to Brāhmaṇas. In the 7th Chapter called 'Upāsanā Yoga', different varieties of worship and *japa* of Gaṇapati Mantra are described. Mental worship (*mānasi pūjā*) is considered the best. Hatred of other gods is derided in strong terms.

There are two ways of worshipping Lord Gaṇeśa. In one He is regarded as identical with the Supreme Spirit—the Paramātman and is worshipped by mystical contemplation. In the other type of worship the image of the god is adorned with flowers and other offerings (*pūjā*).

According to the *Gaṇeśagītā* the duties enjoined in the scriptures should be followed without expectation of any reward (cf. *nishkāmakarmayoga* of the *Gītā*). Conquering one's senses, one should develop equanimity of mind. The yogin who has achieved *śamatva* is the best (cf. the *śamatvayoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā*). Yoga-mārga is not easy. For this the grace of the *Guru*, who can lead the pupil step by step to the final goal, is necessary. Yoga is not union with fortune, kingdom, sovereignty, heaven or immortality; it is the union of the finite soul with Brahman. It can be accomplished through one-pointed meditation. Lord Gaṇeśa assures that the devotees who approach Him through Yoga are liberated and He would never forsake them (cf. the similar assurance of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*).

According to the *Gaṇeśagītā* real yoga is constant experience of Brahman (Supreme Bliss). This is brought about by *abheda-*

*buddhi*. The *Gaṇeśagītā* prescribes jñānayoga, with karman and bhakti as subordinate to it. *Japa, śaraṇāgati*, dedication of all actions to the Lord and meditation generate bhakti, bhakti generates knowledge and knowledge leads to *abhedabuddhi* (identity-consciousness). Abhedabuddhi brings liberation. Hence this is called *mokshasāadhanayoga*.<sup>1</sup>

An important aspect of the philosophy of the Gāṇapatya sect is its belief in the incarnations of Gaṇeśa. It holds that like Viṣṇu Gaṇeśa also takes birth age after age for the destruction of asuras and welfare of humanity. The *Maudgala P.* identified Gaṇeśa with Om (*Om iti sabdobhūt sa vai Gajākārah*). The *Gāṇapatyātharvaśirsha Upa.* identifies him with Brahma (*tvameva sarvaṁ khalvidam Brahmāsi*).

### *Popularity of Gaṇeśa*

Though the cult of Gaṇeśa never became as important as some of the other major cults, yet his worship without reference to any particular sect is practised even now by nearly all Hindus at the beginning of any *naimittika karmans* (occasional religious ceremonies), *samskāras* and also on special occasions before the main ceremony begins.<sup>2</sup> He is worshipped in every Hindu home as the lord of intellect and wisdom (*Buddhidātā*), the dispeller of obstacles (*Vighnanāśana*) and bestower of success (*Siddhidātā*). He is also considered to be the guardian of the public ways. Temples of Gaṇapati are scattered all over India. His image is almost always found in Śiva temples.

The mantra uttered by the priest at the time of occasional religious ceremonies is *Om Gaṇeśādipaṅchadevatābhyo namaḥ* (Om, Salutation to the five devatās with Gaṇeśa in the forefront). This attitude was the main characteristic of the Smārta-Pañchopāsakas who, unless properly initiated into a particular major Paurāṇika cult like Vaishṇava, Śaiva or Śākta, believed in each deity as an individual manifestation of the one Supreme Lord

<sup>1</sup>For details vide, Sitaramaiah, G., 'Śrī Gaṇeśa-Gītā—its Religious and Philosophical Significance', *POC*, Gauhati Session, Vol. II, 1966, p. 241 ff. cf. also Agrawala, V.S., 'Meaning of Gaṇapati', *JOI*, XIII, pt. i, Sept. 1963, pp. 1-4. He identifies Gaṇapati with Yaksha Prajāpati or Brahmaṇaspati.

<sup>2</sup>Bhandarkar, *op.cit.*



(*infra*, pp. 371-3). They cherish this syncretistic belief from hoary antiquity, and Gaṇapati worship was only one late facet of this belief.<sup>1</sup>

Gaṇeśa is the only god who does not need an image to invoke him. If an image is there that is well and good; if it is not there then a small piece of earth wrapped in sacred red thread takes his form. In this sense he may be regarded as the god of the poor. However, innumerable images of Gaṇeśa are found all over India.

The earliest Gaṇeśa images are supposed to be those found in the Sankisa mound (Etah Dist., U.P.) and at Bhumara (M.P.) both of about the fifth-sixth cent. A.D. His representation on a terracotta bas-relief from Akra (Bannu Dist., Pakistan) is also assigned to the same age.<sup>2</sup> A Kabul image of Gaṇeśa contains an inscription in two lines. It is written in the characters of sixth or seventh century A.D., describes the image as that of Mahāvināyaka and records that it was installed by Shāhi Khiṅgala.<sup>3</sup> The Buddhist and Jainas also seem to have held Gaṇeśa in great respect. The appeal of this god spread even outside India, and his images of the medieval period have been found in Nepal, China, Burma, Indo-China, Java, Borneo, Japan, and other places.<sup>4</sup>

The veneration paid to Gaṇeśa specially by Hindu traders and businessmen in modern times may be traced to the early medieval period. A pillar found at Ghatiyala (Jodhpur, Rajasthan) contains four images of Gaṇapati facing four quarters as its capital piece, and the inscription engraved on it (861 A.D.) informs us that it was erected by Kakkuka, the Pratihāra king, at the end of a market at a place called Rohinsakūpa for the success of the business enterprises of the local traders through the grace of this god. Two or three more such inscriptions from Ghatiyala record the same fact and one of them states that the Ābhīras used to infest Rohinsakūpa and after removing this obstacle Kakkuka established there a centre of trade. This emphasizes the nature of Gaṇeśa as the remover of obstacles.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*PTR*, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup>Getty, A., *Gaṇeśa*, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>*EI*, XXXV, p. 47; also see V.C. Srivastava, 'Gaṇeśa Images from Afganistan', *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, 40, pt. 1, pp. 14-19.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Puri, B.N., 'Gaṇeśa and Gaṇapati Cult in India and South-East Asia', *JIH*, XLVIII, pt. 2, August 1970, p. 405-13.

<sup>5</sup>*PTR*, p. 153.

## Chapter 15

# Skanda-Karttikeya

### *Early References*

Worship of Kārttikeya was known in India from a very early period. Whether the worshipper of the god considered themselves a sect or not, is difficult to be said. It is certain however that they were never given a separate status like the exclusive devotees of the five Paurāṇika deities (Pañchadevopāsakas) – Vishṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Sūrya and Gaṇapati. In the centuries immediately preceding and succeeding the birth of Christ the god was worshipped under different names or aspects, such as Skanda, Viśākha, Kumāra, Mahāsena, Brahmaṇyadeva, etc. He was, however, never included in the list of Vedic deities and belonged to the category of the Laukika-devatās.

The *Baudhāyana DS* (II. 5-8) provides quite early references to Skanda, Shaṇmukha, Jayanta, Viśākha, Subrahmaṇya, and Mahāsena.<sup>1</sup> In later ages these were regarded as the various names and aspects of one deity. In the age of Patañjali Skanda and Viśākha were almost certainly the names of two different deities, for while commenting on the Pāṇini's sūtra *jīvikārthe chāpanye* (V. 3.99) he refers to the images of Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha being sold by the Mauryas in their greed for gold. As argued by R.G. Bhandarkar<sup>2</sup> if Skanda and Viśākha had denoted a single deity Patañjali would have mentioned only one name, but as he has used two names it is clear that they denoted two different gods. Even during the time of the Kushāṇa king Huvishka Skanda and Viśākha are depicted on coins as two different deities. Further, some gold coins of Huvishka contain two figures on their reverse with the names Skanda-Kumāra and Viśākha (Vizago), while a

<sup>1</sup>Jash, Pranabananda, 'Some Aspects of Kārttikeya Worship with Special Reference to Bengal', *PIHC*, 1981, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup>*VSMR*, p. 215.

few others of the same ruler contain three figures inside some sort of a shrine, described as Skanda-Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsenā.<sup>1</sup> It also proves that till that age Skanda-Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsenā were regarded as three different deities.

*Amalgamation of the Various Gods into Skanda-Kārttikeya and the Paurāṇika Stories of His Birth*

In course of time these different divinities alongwith many others came to be known as different names of the same god. The *Amarakosha* enumerates them as follows : Kārttikeya, Mahāsenā Śarajanmā, Shaḍānana, Pārvatīnandana, Skanda, Senānī, Agnibhū, Guha, Bihuleya, Tārakajit, Viśākha, Sikhivāhana, Shaṇmātura, Śaktidhara, Kumāra and Krauñchadāraṇa. Some of these are the names of the different deities who were identified with Skanda-Kārttikeya while others are the deification of epithets which were given to him as a result of the circumstances of his birth explained mythologically in the epics, Purāṇas and other texts. The *Rāmā.* mentions Skanda as a son of Rudra, though not directly begotten by him on Pārvatī. According to this Epic Agni's seed fell in the Gaṅgā who, unable to bear its heat, deposited it among the reeds where Skanda grew up (hence his name Śarajanmā) nursed by the six Kṛttikās (hence his names Kārttikeya and Shaṇmātura). The Skandotpattiparvādhyāya of the Vana-parvan of the *Mbh.*, however, contains earlier legends about the birth of this god or a group of gods of like nature later amalgamated into one deity. Here this composite god is regarded as the son of Śiva and Pārvatī who brought him into being for leading the army of the gods (*devasenā*) in their fight with the mighty Tārakāsura. In one anecdote we are told that Aṅgiras's wife approached Agni. She deposited the seed in a golden pot among reeds on Śvetaparvata. She assumed the shape of the wives of all the Saptarṣhis or the seven sages except that of Arundhatī and deposited the seed six times. Out of this Agni's wife Svāhā brought forth a six-headed son. In one legend Devasenā (an abstraction of the divine army) was looking for a suitable husband, and in Kārttikeya she found her spouse. Another account says

<sup>1</sup>PIHC, 1981, p. 164.

that Śiva's seed fell in Agni. He, unable to bear it, deposited it in the Gaṅgā, who also laid it down by the reeds. The Kṛttikā sisters saw it and each of them conceived and begot a son. Afterwards all these children became combined into one being having six heads (hence his names Shaḍānana and Shaṣṭmukha). A still later account has it that at gods' request Agni deposited his seed in the Gaṅgā (hence his name Agnibhū) who fainted because of its unbearable power and heat. The seed 'fell' and the child born of it was Skanda (spilled); it was hidden among the reeds and was reared by the Kṛttikā sisters; so he was called Kārttikeya.

These different accounts tend to blur the true origin of Kārttikeya. Some of them make him the son of Maheśvara, some of Agni (Agnibhū), some say he was born of Umā, others say he was the son of the Kṛttikās (Kārttikeya) and still others maintain that he was begotten on the Gaṅgā (Gaṅgāputra). Several other stories seek to explain other names of the deity. For instance the *Mbh.* relates that Viśākha arose from the right side of Skanda when the latter was struck by the thunderbolt of Indra. However, these accounts contain certain common points also : (1) direct begetting of Kārttikeya by Śiva or conception by Umā is usually avoided; (2) yet in each account Śiva and Umā's indirect parentage is indicated; (3) direct connection is sought to be established between him and Agni, Gaṅgā and the Kṛttikās; (4) he is said to be the destined divine general and the deliverer of the gods from demon Tāraka's menace (hence his name Tārakajit); (5) in some accounts he is connected with cocks or peacocks (hence his name Śikhivāhana).<sup>1</sup>

#### *Non-Aryan Elements in the Personality of Skanda-Kārttikeya*

From the above stories it is obvious that in course of its historical development the cult of Skanda-Kārttikeya assimilated the influences of the concepts and worship of Rudra-Śiva, Agni, Gaṅgā, the six Kṛttikās etc. In course of time it also imbibed the elements of the worship of Brahmā, Sūrya, and a number of popular and tribal faiths. In the following pages we propose to analyse the various elements of this composite cult.

The deity Skanda-Kārttikeya is unknown to the Vedas. In its

<sup>1</sup>For details vide, Bhattacharji, S., *The Indian Theogony*, pp. 180-83.



formative stages his worship was probably prevalent among the non-Vedic and non-Aryan people. The *Pāraskara GS* (I. 16. 24) represents Kumāra as a demon harassing infants. The *Mbh.* (Vanaparvan, 230) speaks of Skandagrahas who are no other than rākshasas. The *Vāyu P.* (LXIX. 191) speaks of the Skandagrahas as rākshasas fearful to children. In the *AV* in Skandayāga, also known as Dhūrtakalpa, the deity is associated with the peacock (*yam vahanti Mayūrah*), bells and banners (*ghaṇṭa patākinī*). The tradition finds reflection in the *Vishṇudharmottara* (III.7.5) where *ghaṇṭa* and *patākā* figure among the attributes of Skanda.<sup>1</sup>

### *Śaiva Association*

There can be hardly any doubt that by the time the major Purāṇas were composed Skanda-Kārttikeya had become not only one of the leaders of the Gaṇas of Śiva but also the son of the latter. His being the leader of the army of the gods was probably suggested by his being the leader of the Gaṇas of Rudra. According to a Liṅgāyata tradition he was the founder of a *gotra* and was a form of Śiva himself. Skanda's assimilation in the Śaiva cult appears to have been principally through Gaṅgā, Agni and the Kṛttikās. The resistance to this fusion (of Śiva and Kārttikeya cults), which is indicated in mythology also (note that Kārttikeya is hardly ever mentioned as Śiva's direct issue), must have later broken down. In the *HV* (III. 88), where the *Kumārasambhava* legend (as Kālidāsa knew it) is given in brief, Skanda is the son of Śiva and Pārvatī though casual references are still made that he is Agni's son reared by the Kṛttikās among reeds (*HV*, III. 41.3). One *Mbh.* passage mentions that at Śiva's marriage the gods requested him not to deposit his seed in Pārvatī and he agreed. Umā, in mortification, cursed them with sonlessness. Agni, who was not present, contained Śiva's seed. The story seems to rationalize the cultic reluctance to make Kārttikeya the son of Śiva.

### *Association with Mayūra*

In most epic accounts Skanda is given the peacock by the gods. It is striking that the Sabhāparvan of the *Mbh.* mentions Rohitaka as the habitat of Kārttikeya, and states that the place is inhabited by

<sup>1</sup>*PIHC*, 1981, p. 168, n. 1.

the Mattamayūra tribe. Here a reference is obviously made to the Yaudheya tribe famous for its warlike activities and worship of Skanda. We also have historical record of a Śaiva clan called the Mattamayūras whose seat was in the Chedi country of Central India. They appear in history from the seventh century onwards.<sup>1</sup> This Mattamayūra clan may have held orgiastic rituals as the word *matta* (literally 'drunk') seems to suggest. Whether it also held mayūra or peacock in esteem is difficult to say. Anyway, the relationship between the warrior-god and the peacock—which might have been the totem or mark of the Yaudheya tribe—is quite established. According to J.N. Banerjea originally Kārttikeya enjoyed an independent cultic status. It was later that his worship became completely merged in that of Śiva in northern India of the post-Gupta period, with the result that separate shrines were seldom dedicated to this deity.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Vaishṇava Association*

The association of Skanda with war was a fairly old idea. It connects him with Vaishṇavism also. In the *Gītā* (X. 24) Kṛṣṇa is made to say that He is Skanda among warriors (*senānīnāmahaṁ Skandah*). The *Viṣṇudharmottara* (III. 71.7) also states that four-souled eternal god Vāsudeva manifested himself as Kumāra (also four formed—Skanda, Kumāra, Viśākha and Guha) for leading the divine army.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Cock Motif and the Solar Association of Skanda-Kārttikeya*

The solar association of Skanda-Kārttikeya becomes evident by his cock (*kukkuṭa*) motif which has been intimately associated with him since very early times.<sup>4</sup> The *Mbh.* (III. 228-33) refers to *śakti*, *tāmrachūḍa*, *kukkuṭāstra* and *śaṅkha* as his attributes. It is also stated that his flag was kukkuṭa given to him by Agni. The same text describes kukkuṭa as his toy (III. 231.16). In the *Vāyu P.* (LXX II.46) Kārttikeya receives mayūra and kukkuṭa as toys from

<sup>1</sup>Mirashi, V.V., 'The Śaiva Āchāryas of the Mattamayūra Clan', *IHQ*, XXV, i, 1950; also cf. *PTR*, p. 104 f.

<sup>2</sup>*DHI*, p. 364.

<sup>3</sup>*DHI*, p. 365, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Biswas, D.K., 'The Cock Motif in Skanda Worship', *JAIH*, I, pp. 9-16.

Vishṇu. The *Matsya P.* and the *Padma P.* say that kukkuṭa was a gift to him from Tvashṭṛ. The *Skanda P.* (I. ii., 29, 138) gives Kukkuṭin as one of his names, describes kukkuṭa as his vāhana in his war against Tāraka, states that his banner was decorated with kukkuṭa and narrates that it was given to him by the Ocean (and on another occasion by Aruṇa). The *Mbh.* and the *Vāmana P.* list *Kukkuṭikā* as one of his female attendants. Several iconographical texts such as the *Uttarakāmikāgama*, *Amśubhedāgama*, *Kumāratantrāgama*, *Vishṇudharmottara* etc. lay down that the figure of a *kukkuṭa* should be associated with the image of Kārttikeya and a number of Kārttikeya images holding the kukkuṭa have actually been found.<sup>1</sup>

Now, as pointed out by D.K. Biswas, the cock has been associated from very early times with the rising sun.<sup>2</sup> The two *Yajurveda Samhitās* refer to the formula *kṛkavākuḥ Savitraḥ* (cock is sacred to sun) and the *Nirukta* of Yāska explains that the cock is sacred to the sun because he announces the time of sun (by crying out at sunrise).<sup>3</sup> In the Purāṇas and the *HV* the sun gives Yama, his son, a *kṛkavāku* (*kukkuṭa*) to devour the worms when Yama's leg is eaten by them as a result of the curse of Chhāyā. Thus the association of Skanda with *kukkuṭa* brings him into close relationship with the sun. It is supported by the *Vishṇu P.* according to which śakti or lance of Kārttikeya is made of the rays of the sun; by the *Bhaviṣya P.* which identifies Skanda with Rājan, an attendant of the sun; by the *Matsya P.* which associates Skanda with Navagraha worship and by the *Mbh.* according to which the sun gave Subhrāja and Bhāskara, his two attendants, to Kārttikeya. In this connection it is also interesting to note that the Lala Bhagat pillar, which has a cock capital (now detached) and bears an inscription *Kumāravara...* in the characters of the 2nd cent. A.D., contains a figure of Sūrya riding a chariot drawn by four horses (cf. p. 369).

### *Skanda as a God of Learning*

Skanda-Kārttikeya is also associated with wisdom, learning

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

and literary activities. At one place the *Mbh.* (XII. 37.12) identifies him with Sanatkumāra. This tradition may be traced to the *Chhândogya Upa.* (VII.26) where Sanatkumāra, the instructor of Nārada in Brahnavidyā, is described as the same as Skanda. It gave rise to the concept of Skanda as 'instructor god' which is specially found in the South. According to J.N. Banerjea one variety of the images of Kārttikeya (or Subrahmanya, as he is known in the South) is known as Deśika-Subrahmanya in which form he taught Praṇava or the Vedic lore to his father Śiva.<sup>1</sup> The *Kūrma P.* also describes him as an authority on Brahnavidyā. In the *Śiva P.* he is extolled as *Jñānaśaktidhara*. Several other texts associate him with Vedānta by describing him as *Vedāntārthavid*. He is also represented as the promulgator of the meaning of the *Praṇava* mantra to the sage Vāmadeva.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Skanda as Amorous God*

Another significant later addition to the features of Skanda-Kārttikeya is his representation as an amorous god and also as the deity of the devadāsīs and gaṇikās. The *Skanda P.* relates how he was sent by Śiva to destroy Daksha's sacrifice and how at the instigation of Daksha beautiful damsels delayed his journey by entertaining him in the way with dances and songs. The *Rājataranī* describes the devadāsīs associated with the Kārttikeya temple of Puṇḍravardhana where King Jayāpīḍa of Kashmir took shelter during his wanderings. The *Purāṇas* narrate that Skanda dallied with the wives of other gods who reported the matter to Pārvatī. Being unable to dissuade him from doing so, Pārvatī warned him that wherever he would go he would find his mother. This made him to turn into an ascetic.

#### *Contribution of the Southern Śeyon-Murugan Worship*

The worship of Śeyon-Murugan was prevalent in the South since very ancient times.<sup>3</sup> His earliest name occurring in the old

<sup>1</sup>*DHI*, p. 365, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>*PIHC*, 1981, p. 169, fn. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Agrawala, P.K., 'Skanda in the Purāṇas and Classical Literature', *Purāṇa*, VIII, i, Jan. 1966, pp. 135-58.



Tamil hymns is Śeyon (red-complexioned). His wife Vallī was conceived as a hill girl belonging to the hill tribe of Kuravas. He rode a peacock and the temples dedicated to him had cock-banners on their tops. Most likely Murugan was a hill deity of non-Aryan origin. Soon his cult became identified with that of Skanda. This identification had been at least partly affected by the time the *Śilappadikāram* was composed (c. 2nd cent. A.D.) which describes Murugan as the six-faced, twelve-armed son of Śiva and Pārvatī. From the Śaṅgama texts also it appears that the myths, legends and cults of Śeyon-Murugan and Kumāra-Skanda had become mingled by that time.<sup>1</sup> The concepts of Vallī and kukkuṭa-vāhana god probably came from or were strengthened by the Śeyon-Murugan cult.

#### *Other Links and Elements*

In course of time Skanda-Kārttikeya became associated with a number of humble folk deities. Like his mythological father Rudra of the *YV*, Skanda also became god *par excellence* of thieves and robbers. In the *Kathāsaritsāgara* he is described as the god of bandits. In the *Skandayāga* he is called Dhūrta, that is god of knavery. His association with the *guru* of thieves and robbers is also mentioned in the *Mṛchchhakatika* of Śūdraka (Act III).

Skanda is sometimes described as goat-headed (*Chāgovaktra*) (cf. the elephant-headed form of his mythological brother Gaṇeśa). It suggests that at some stage of his development he assimilated some tribal deity conceived in the form of a goat.

The popularity of Skanda was further enhanced by his equation with Naigameśa who could grant the boon of child to barren women and who was regarded as the protector of children. His earlier association with non-Aryan deities which were believed to afflict new born babe and mother was thus later transformed (cf. the transformation of Gaṇeśa from the 'god of obstacles' into the 'remover of obstacles').

#### *Popularity of Skanda-Kārttikeya*

The archaeological evidence for the prevalence of Skanda-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

Kārttikeya worship is found from the first century A.D. As noted above, on the reverse of the coins of the Kushāṇa emperors Kanishka and Huvishka are found the figures and names of Skanda-Kumāra, Mahāsena and Viśākha. Some 1st century A.D. copper coins of Ayodhyā issued by the local Mitra kings, Devamitra and Vijayamitra, show a cock-crested column as their reverse device. It was also probably connected with the worship of Skanda. However, the most interesting numismatic evidence about his worship is supplied by the Yaudheya coins of about the 2nd-3rd century A.D. The Yaudheyas appear to have been the exclusive worshippers of Mahāsena-Kārttikeya. In a *Mbh.* passage Rohitaka, the city of the Yaudheyas, here named Mattamayūrakas, is called the favourite residence of Kārttikeya where Arjuna waged a great war against them. This place having been the favourite residence of the deity means that he was tutelary god of the locality. This is supported by the evidence of the *Mahāmāyūrī* which states that 'Kumāra-Kārttikeya, was the world-famed (tutelary deity) of Rohitaka' (*Rohitake Kārttikeyaḥ Kumāro lokaviśrutah*).

The coins of the Yaudheyas<sup>1</sup> contain the figure of Kārttikeya, sometimes one- and at other times six-headed (*Shaḍānana*), carrying a spear (*śakti*) and a cock or peacock in its two hands. The legend on some of the Yaudheya coins can be correctly read as *Bhagavato Svāmino Brahmanyadevasya Kumārasya*, '(coin of) Brahmanyadeva Kumāra, the worshipful lord'. It suggests that these were issued in the name of Brahmanyadeva Kumāra who was regarded as the spiritual and temporal head of the Yaudheya state. The Yaudheyas were *āyudhajīvī* Kshatriyas (i.e. 'Kshatriyas living by their weapons'). It was but natural for them to dedicate their state to their divine war-lord. This interpretation is substantiated by a terracotta seal (c. 3rd-4th cent. A.D.) unearthed by Marshall at Bhita,<sup>2</sup> the inscription on which records another instance of the dedication of a state to Mahāsena. The marginal legend reads *Śrī-Vindhyavedhamahārājasya Maheśvara-Mahāsenā-tisṛṣṭarājyasya Vrshadhvajasya Gautamīputrasya* meaning 'of the

<sup>1</sup>Singh, O.P., *Religion and Iconography in Early Indian Coins*, Varanasi, 1978, pp. 70-78.

<sup>2</sup>*PTR*, p. 148.

illustrious Mahārāja Gautamīputra Vṛshadhvaja, the penetrator of the Vindhya, who had made over his kingdom to the great lord Kārttikeya'.<sup>1</sup>

As regards epigraphical references to Kārttikeya worship, a *Kumāra sthāna* or shrine of the god Kumāra (Kārttikeya) is mentioned in an Abbottabad inscription of about the third century A.D.<sup>2</sup> The second century A.D. stone objects consisting of a broken pillar of red sandstone and a cock carved in the round in the same material (undoubtedly the capital of the column) were found at Lala Bhagat (Kanpur Dist. U.P.). The pillar was most likely erected in front of a temple of the god. Among the pillar carvings prominence is given to the figure of Sūrya riding a chariot drawn by four horses. The pillar contains an inscription which refers to *Kumāravara*. The Bilsad stone pillar inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I records the addition of a *pratoli* by one Dhruvaśarman to the already existing temple of Brahmanyadeva Svāmī Mahāseṇa.<sup>3</sup> Though described in many of his coin legends as Paramabhāgavata, Kumāragupta I seems to have also been a worshipper of Kārttikeya, for on the reverse of some of his gold coins is depicted a beautiful image of the god riding on his peacock mount. The Bihar pillar inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I<sup>4</sup> also contains a reference to the shrine of Bhadrāryyā and mentions Skanda and the Divine Mothers in that connection.

The position of Skanda was obviously quite high in the Gupta age. The various aspects of his cult and personality were elaborated in this age; the legend of his birth as found in the Purāṇas and the *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa prove it. The legend of the killing of Tāraka, unknown in the pre-Gupta age and first briefly noticed in the *Vāyu P.*, is elaborated in this period (in the *Mbh.* the rival of Tāraka is Mahishāsura).

One of the earliest images of Skanda comes from Mahasthan-garh (1st-2nd cent. A.D.). In fact the bulk of early images of the deity are found in north Bengal and the adjoining regions—

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 148; Sircar, D.C., *El*, XXX, p. 59ff.

<sup>3</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, Meerut, 1984, p. 131 ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 196 ff. Some scholars ascribe this record to Skandagupta or Purugupta. We believe that its first part belongs to Kumāragupta I.



Puṇḍravardhana being one of the main centres of his worship. The *Garuḍa P.* refers to this place as a sacred *tīrtha* of Kārttikeya. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* also refers to a famous temple of Kārttikeya near Puṇḍravardhana. In an inscription of Khotṭiga dated 967 A.D. reference is made to a Gauḍa Brāhmaṇa who devoted himself to popularising the worship of Kārttikeya in the Kanarese District.<sup>1</sup>

In the extant late Gupta and medieval north Indian images Kārttikeya is usually shown as two- or four-armed, riding on his peacock mount and is sometimes attended by his two consorts, viz. Devasenā and Vallī. As regards literature, several holy observances and vows in the name of Kumāra and Kārttikeya are mentioned in Hemādri's *Vratakhanda*. His worship has not become obsolete even at the present day. In the autumnal worship of Durgā, the clay image of the god (*kṣaṇikas*) alongwith those of Durgā and her other children are worshipped in Bengal. Skanda's clay image is also separately worshipped every year on the last day of the month of Kārttika by people wishing progeny and by women of the town.<sup>2</sup> Skanda, known as Subrahmaṇya (evidently derived from the earlier name Brahmaṇyadeva), was worshipped in medieval times in South India also and some shrines of the god of the period are still found there and the Tamil songs composed in his honour are full of noble and beautiful sentiments.

<sup>1</sup>PIHC, 1981, p. 169 ff.

<sup>2</sup>DHI, p. 364.



## Chapter 16

# Other Gods and Cults

### *Syncretistic Tendencies and Smārta Pañchāyatana Pūjā*

Attempts at re-conciliation and rapproachment between the rival creeds were made in India from a very early period. The Ṛgvedic ṛṣhis rightly emphasised that the sages call the one eternally existing principle in various ways (*ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*) and the names denoting this principle may be different, such as Indra, Agni, the celestial sun-bird Garutmān, Yama, Mātariśvā, etc. In the post-Saṁhitā period many factors contributed to the continuance of this tendency. The Aśokan ideal of *samavāya* and the Jaina philosophy of *anekānta* were expressions of the same thinking. The spread of Vedāntic teachings among the worshippers of the various creeds was not a little responsible for the growth of a liberal religious outlook. Smṛti works like those of Manu and Yājñavalkya did not advocate the cause of any cult in particular and inculcated among the devotees of different sects (who also followed the injunctions laid down in these Smṛti works) a liberal outlook. The early foreign immigrants into India (the Śakas, the Pahlavas, the Kushāṇas and the Hūṇas) who were presumably less cultured than the Indians and were therefore prone to the influence of the latter, especially in matters of religion, usually paid equal homage to gods and goddesses of more than one creed. Their kings often used as devices on their coins the figures of deities belonging to different pantheons. Kanishka's affiliation with Buddhism for example is sufficiently established by the Chinese literary data, but in the medley of the devices on his coins, many scholars recognise his eclecticism in religious matters. In this atmosphere many Hindus of higher orders known as Smārtas, evolved a kind of worship described as Pañchāyatana pūjā in which the principal deities of the five approved Brāhmaṇical Hindu

cults were the objects of veneration. The principal object of worship in it was usually in the form of an aniconic emblem which symbolised all the five cult deities. Sometimes five symbols of five major gods were placed on a round open metal dish called Pañchāyatana, the symbol of the deity preferred by the worshipper being in the centre. The mode of placing in the centre the symbol of the preferred deity in the Pañchāyatana arrangement indicated the cult affiliation of the Smārta worshipper. The Pañchāyatana pūjā of the Smārtas is also illustrated in many extant early and late medieval temples of India, in which the central shrine housing the principal deity is surrounded by four smaller shrines on the four corners of the quadrangle containing the figures of the four other deities.

Such a religious syncretistic tendency is very interestingly illustrated by a large number of early medieval sculptures also. A Pañchāyatana Śivaliṅga, originally found in Bihar and now in the collection of the Indian Museum, shows the four cult deities, Gaṇapati, Viṣṇu, Pārvatī and Sūrya on the four sides of the central Śaiva emblem, all of which taken together symbolise the five Brāhmaṇical Hindu cults. The Hari-Hara mūrti (or Haryardha aspect of Śiva to a Śaiva) emphasises the reconciliation between the two major cults of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. The composite icons combining in them the features of Sūrya and Śiva and Mārtaṇḍa and Bhairava are comparatively fewer.<sup>1</sup> The *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* invokes Sūrya in this manner "Brahmā's, Śiva's and Viṣṇu's bodies are the same as the body of the resplendent Sun whose real nature is three-fold indeed, may he be gracious".<sup>2</sup> The Ardhanārīśvara mūrtis of Śiva also symbolise the syncretistic ideology, for they apparently emphasise the union of the principal cult deities of Śaivism and Śāktism. Śiva-Lokeśvara, Sūrya-Lokeśvara and Hari-Hara-Sūrya-Buddha icons show syncretism between Brāhmaṇical Hinduism and Buddhism. Many other such sculptures are known.<sup>3</sup> These may also be called another mode of symbolising the Pañchāyatana worship of the Smārtas.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Maitra, J., 'Mārtaṇḍa-Bhairava', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 94 ff. Biswas, 'Sūrya and Śiva', *IHQ*, XXIV.

<sup>2</sup>*DHI*, p. 551.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 546.

<sup>4</sup>Many Brāhmaṇical Hindu and Buddhist images emphasise the sectarian ill-feeling also. One among the numerous forms of Avalokiteśvara or Lokeśvara

The spirit of syncretism expressed itself in many other ways. For example, for some time Sūrya formed with Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, a kind of quadrumvirate, as in many ceremonial gifts these four go together. The *Matsya P.* lays down that Brahmā Viṣṇu, Śiva and Sūrya are identical or non-different (*abheda*). The *Kūrma P.* states that it originally consisted of four Saṁhitās — Brāhmī, Bhāgavatī, Saurī and Vaishṇavī. The *Skanda P.* is divided into six Saṁhitās namely of Sanatkumāra and Sūta, Vaishṇavī, Brāhmī, Śāṅkarī and Saurī. These facts suggest that these gods were associated together in some places and times. As Brahmā was gradually ousted from the field, a trinity of the other three was left and attempt was indeed made to establish a triad of Sūrya, Śiva and Viṣṇu, with prominence given to the first. However the grouping of gods was always liable to alteration. The *Matsya P.* lays down that vows are to be made to Śiva, Sūrya and Viṣṇu. Sūrya is found combined with the other three major gods—with Viṣṇu in Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa figures (Viṣṇu being himself an Āditya), with Śiva in Mārtaṇḍa-Bhairava figures, and with Brahmā in the images of a slightly later date. The *Nāradiya P.* ascribes to the second part of the *Vāmana P.* four Saṁhitās namely Māheśvarī, Bhāgavatī, Saurī and Gaṇeśvarī, thus belittling the importance of Brahmā and extolling that of Gaṇeśa. The *Garuḍa P.* accords the highest position to Viṣṇu but prescribes modes of worship of Śiva, Durgā, Gaṇeśa and Sūrya also in the full Smārta manner. The *Bhavishya P.* mentions different groupings in different parts and, though conceding the importance of Sūrya in some parts, reserves pre-eminence for the old triad—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

### *Brahmā*

In the presentday Hinduism theoretically Brahmā, Viṣṇu and

in the Vajrayāna pantheon is known as Hari-Hari-Hari-vāhanodbhava Lokeśvara. It depicts Padmapāṇi-Avalokiteśvara, the spiritual son of the Dhyānī-Buddha Amitābha, riding on the shoulders of Viṣṇu (Hari) who has Garuḍa (Hari) as his mount who is turn is mounted on the back of a lion (Hari). Advantage was thus taken of some of the various synonyms of the word *hari* by the sectarian iconographer in order to formulate such a type of icon in which the principal object of worship of the followers of one of the major Hindu cults was shown as a mere mount of a Buddhist divinity (*DHI*, p. 540).



Śiva form the official Trinity of major gods in which Brahmā (masculine Brahman) is acknowledged as the creator of men and even of gods. But in practice he does not occupy much prominence in the devotion of the people. His position in the Hindu pantheon is inferior to that of any important cult deity and the very act of creating this universe and peopling it, his main duty, is now primarily attributed by the followers of the various cults to the respective deities of their choice.<sup>1</sup> Though called Svayambhū (self-created), he is conceived to have sprung out of the mundane egg or of the lotus grown in the navel of Viṣṇu, and is said to have been saved by the latter from destruction at the hands of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. A vague incest-myth of the *Rgveda* was foisted on him, and Śiva was the deity who was given the task of punishing him for this moral lapse. Such myths indicate a general transfer of allegiance of the people from Brahmā to the two other gods of the Trinity. Nevertheless Brahmā had a small following, and a belated attempt was made by the author of the *Padma* to revive his glory as a supreme god. Both the *Bṛhatsamhitā* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara* prescribe the mode of making his images.

However, as pointed out by Banerjea, such was not his position when the concrete concept about him and gods allied to him began to take shape in the Later Vedic age. Many Later Vedic texts refer to the creator gods such as Viśvakarman, Brahmanaspati, Hiranyagarbha, Prajāpati, Brahmā and Brahma.

The earliest sections of the *RV* know Brahmanaspati as the lord of prayer. He, like a blacksmith, is said to have shaped all created things (X.72.2). According to S. Bhattacharji his rise was concomitant with Varuṇa's decline.<sup>2</sup> The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* makes Brahmanaspati the god of the hymn 'I invoke the lord of the Gaṇas'. This description of Brahmanaspati as Gaṇapati naturally reminds us, and became the basis of his identification, though incorrectly, with the epic-Paurāṇika Gaṇeśa. Bṛhaspati is another major Vedic precursor of the epic-Paurāṇika Brahmā. He is the chief offerer of prayers and sacrifices and is, therefore, the abstraction of the priestly order. The clue to Bṛhaspati's

<sup>1</sup>*DHI*, p. 511.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharji, S., *The Indian Theogony*, p. 317.



identification with *Brahmā* is supplied by the *ŚB*, which says 'Bṛhaspati is the Brahman' (X.2.3.3) and 'the Brahman is the sacrifice' (V.3.2.4). Brahman is identified with Agni and Bṛhaspati (*ŚB* IX.2.3.3); by him is creation accomplished.<sup>1</sup> But in the epics and *Purāṇas* the picture changes considerably, for now we have two distinct personalities : Bṛhaspati, the priest and counsellor of the gods, and *Brahmā*, the grandfather.

Tvashtṛ and Viśvakarman definitely belong to the creator-group of gods. Viśvakarman is identified with Prajāpati. Tvashtṛ gradually became the lord of all creation, animate and inanimate.

The most important epiphany of *Brahmā* is found in his Prajāpati aspect. In the *RV* the epithet is applied to Savitr, Soma, Agni and Indra. In the last verse of the *RV* (X.121) Prajāpati is described as the lord of all the created beings. According to the *ŚB* (X.6.5.9) Prajāpati originated from *Brahmā* who is self-existent. Prajāpati is also the supporter of this universe, a function assigned to Vishṇu in the epics and the *Purāṇas*. The *Rāmā.* gives a list of ancient Prajāpatis. From them descended the gods, men and all creatures. In the *Mbh.*, however, Prajāpatis are minor assistants of *Brahmā* and carry out the latter's command and create different species.<sup>2</sup>

Prajāpati became Viśvakarman after he created the universe. Viśvakarman produced the sky and earth (*dyāvā bhūmim janayan*) and shaped them with his hands (*bāhubhyām*). He was the first creator. He was not merely the material cause but also the efficient cause of the world. He was the father of Viśvarūpa, his three-headed son. He fashions forms (*rūpa*) of creatures and this sense is expressed in his name Viśvakarman (the all fashioner) too.

Hiraṇyagarbha, another Vedic creator god, is assumed to have been the first to be born and is said to have established the earth and the sky in the proper position (*RV*, X.121.1). We are told that in the beginning there was only Hiraṇyagarbha, the lord of all beings. He upheld the earth and heaven. However the *Brāhmaṇas* do not mention Hiraṇyagarbha as a separate epiphany except as a phase in the graded creative process.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 331.

In the *AV* we get another manifestation of **Brahmā**, namely **Skambha**. He is called **Purusha**, **Brahman**, **Parameshṭhin**, **Prajāpati**, **Hiraṇyagarbha** and **Skambha**. **Svayambhū** as an epiphany of **Brahmā** was rather late in making his appearance. In the *ŚB* we hear of **Brahmā Svayambhū** who was performing penances. As **Brahmā** is usually described as rising out of a lotus from **Vishṇu's** navel, strictly speaking he is not **Svayambhū**.

The more concrete concept of **Brahmā** took some time to develop and one of the earliest allusions to him are found in the *Muṇḍaka Upa.* where he is described as first of the gods (*Brahmā devānāṃ prathamah*), creator of the universe (*Viśvasyakartā*) and the preserver of the world (*bhuvanasya goptā*). According to the *Manusmṛti* the self-existent (*svayambhū*) Lord was born in the golden egg (*haimamaṇḍam*) as **Brahmā**, the progenitor of all the worlds (*sarvalokapitāmahaḥ*). In this context the epithet **Nārāyaṇa** is also applied to him. According to **Banerjea** this statement of the *Smṛti* is based on the much older texts like the *ŚB* and others which describe how **Prajāpati** assumed the forms of fish, tortoise and boar for the attainment of some particular ends.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of **Brahmā** further developed in the epics. There he is called **Prajāpati**, **Dhātā**, **Vidhātā**, **Pitāmaha**, **Viśveśa**, **Srashtā**, etc. According to **Banerjea** in the period when early portions of the epics were composed, he enjoyed some importance. But in the later sections of the epics his position gradually declined. In the *Rāmā.* **Brahmā** commands **Vālmiki** to compose the epic and personally appears to receive oblations at **Daśaratha's** horse-sacrifice. The gods approach him for the creation of **Rāma**; he agrees. Then **Svayambhū Brahmā** convenes an assembly of gods, where he proposes that they should help **Vishṇu** when he is incarnated. In this work **Brahmaloka** is said to be above the region of the gods. The *Mbh.* says that **Brahmā**, the creator, was born of an egg. In this epic he is distinguished from **Prajāpati**. **Brahmā** existed before and is superior to **Prajāpati**. In the *HV* too, **Brahmā** is born of a golden egg. The universe is created out of the broken bits of the shell. He created the prime progenitors, and gods, the *Vedas*, and men and women out of his two parts.

One of the causes of the decline of **Brahmā** lay in the fundamental weakness of his character: he could be pleased by

<sup>1</sup>*DHI*, p. 511.

ascetic practices not only by the gods but also by the demons and when propitiated granted the latter desired powers with disastrous results. The epics and the Purāṇas narrate numerous tales about Viṣṇu and Śiva setting matters right on such occasions. It gradually resulted in the decline of Brahmā in comparison to them. Brahmā now becomes subservient to them. He is born from the lotus issuing forth from Viṣṇu's navel, worships horse-headed form of Viṣṇu and receives laws from him. In some epic passages Śiva creates Brahmā, the creator, and Brahmā praises the greatness of the former. The decline of his position was persistent and the Purāṇas take advantage of the vague deprecatory myths associated with Prajāpati to enhance the process of his decline. The stories of Brahmā's incestuous love for his own daughter and of his passion for telling lies may be recalled in this connection. In the *Mbh.* we are told that Brahmā and Viṣṇu were competing with each other in plumbing the depth and scaling the height of the Sthānumūrti of Śiva. Brahmā falsely claimed to have reached the top of the column; Śiva cursed him by saying that he would never have a cult of his own. This is clearly a later mythological gloss attempting to explain the actual absence or comparative insignificance of the Brahmā cult.

In the Purāṇas Brahmā is a rather helpless god having very little practical initiative of his own. It is true that in the Paurāṇika age his right to be worshipped as a subsidiary deity was admitted, and his image was placed in a niche in the temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva. He also figured in the images of the Trinity. But he was never accorded the central position, which was reserved for one of the other two gods. Some sacred places like Prayāga and Pushkara were specially associated with him. Though the special sect bearing his name disappeared in course of time, his worship did not die out altogether. His images are found from Sindh to Bengal, even though they are not very large in number. These depict him three-faced (most of them being relief sculptures, the fourth face is not shown; it is present only in those which are fully in the round), pot-bellied, four-armed and either standing or seated on his mount, a swan. One of his earliest brass or bronze images, fully in the round, was found at Mirpur Khas in Sindh.

When the Smārtas formulated their divine pentad (*Pañchāyatana*) Brahmā finally lost his position as a sectarian deity. Today

in the whole of India there are only about half-a-dozen independent temples dedicated to him—at Dudahi, Khajuraho, Unkhal, Vasantgarh, Pushkar etc.<sup>1</sup> He has been ousted from the inner sanctuary and placed outside as a mere *parivāra-devatā* in the temples of Viṣṇu, Śiva and even of Kārttikeya.

### *Sarasvatī*

Sarasvatī is known from early period mainly as the goddess of speech and wisdom. In the *Manusmṛti*, offerings to her are prescribed for the expiation of falsehood. Although Macdonell thinks that in the *RV* she is nothing more than a river-goddess, there are also passages in that work which clearly connect her with wisdom and instruction.<sup>2</sup> According to Banerjea the fact that Vedic learning developed on the banks of Sarasvatī seems to have played some part in making her the goddess of learning.<sup>3</sup> In the 10th maṇḍala of the *RV* Vāk is described as the embodiment of the Śakti principle. In the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*, however, Sarasvatī's connection with speech (*Vāk*) becomes quite clear when she communicates vigour to Indra by her speech. In the *Brāhmaṇas*, and chiefly in the *ŚB*, she is repeatedly described as the personification of speech. In the *Āśvalāyana GS* she is invoked to give intelligence to the new-born child. In the *Pāraskara GS* also, she is requested to bestow insight and intelligence upon her worshippers. In the later mythology, she becomes the only accepted goddess of learning. In the epics she is called the tongue of Viṣṇu and in the *Mbh.* she gets the highly flattering title, 'the Mother of the Vedas'.<sup>4</sup>

As a presiding deity of learning, it was natural that Sarasvatī became the goddess of Arts and Music. The *vīṇā* became her special instrument. In the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana the Nāgarakas flock every fortnight to the temple of the goddess Sarasvatī to witness dramatic performances etc. According to the *Chūlavamśa*, King Parākramabāhu built a palace called Sarassatīmaṇḍapa.

<sup>1</sup>*DHI*, p. 514. Cf. Tripathi, L.K., 'The Date of the Brahmā Temple at Khajuraho', *JAIH*, V, p. 154 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Chatterjee, A.K., 'Some Aspects of Sarasvatī', in *Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmī* [and *Sarasvatī in Art and Literature*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1970, p. 148 ff.]; Yasodadevi, V., 'Sarasvatī Through the Ages', *JIH*, XLI, pt. 3, Dec. 63, pp. 681-97.

<sup>3</sup>*DHI*, p. 377.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*



Bhojadeva's great work on rhetoric was named *Sarasvatikaṇṭhā-bharaṇa* (i.e. the necklace of Sarasvatī).

But the personality of Sarasvatī has other aspects also. In the *ŚB* she often appears as a healer-goddess. Her conception as a healer and physician may be traced to a Vedic passage where she, alongwith the Aśvins, is said to have refreshed Indra. According to the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva the 'potent drugs' of Sarasvatī were used by the ladies of Pāṭaliputra to cure some dangerously sick people.

Sarasvatī is represented in the *ŚB* as a deity of prosperity also. In this connection one may recall that as a river-goddess in the *RV* Sarasvatī has been described as yielding riches of every kind and is invoked to give health, plenty and nourishment. In this text the epithet *Subhagā* is applied to her more than once.

In a passage of the *Mbh.* (XII. 122.25) Sarasvatī is associated with the science of judicature (*daṇḍanīti*). In this epic she is also represented as the wife of Viṣṇu or Brahmā and sometimes as the daughter of the latter.<sup>1</sup> Swan (*haṁsa*) the *vāhana* of Brahmā became her *vāhana* also. In some Bengal sculptures she is found seated on a lamb.

Like Lakshmī, Sarasvatī had a prominent place in Buddhism and Jainism also. In Jainism she heads the Śrutadevatās and the Vidyādevīs. A second century Jaina image of Sarasvatī was found at Kaṅkāli ṭilā, Mathurā. An early Buddhist prototype of this goddess is found at Bharhut in which she is depicted as playing on a harp.<sup>2</sup> Her separate figures from the late Gupta period onwards are comparatively commoner. Two-armed images of the goddess

<sup>1</sup>The Purāṇas describe the story of Brahmā's incest with his daughter Sarasvatī (also called Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī, Śatarūpā, Ātmajā etc.) in detail. According to the *Matsya P.* Brahmā produced ten sons from his mind and one daughter Sarasvatī from his body and became enamoured of her. His keen desire of never ceasing to look at her caused a face to spring in each direction—hence his five faces one of which was subsequently lost in a contest with the five-faced Rudra. Sarasvatī's association with Viṣṇu is of more recent origin and is found in the *Brahmavaivartta P.* (cf. Bhāttasali, N.K., *Iconography of Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca, 1929, p. 189 ff.).

<sup>2</sup>DHI, p. 377.

are shown as playing on a *viṇā*, but in the four-armed ones the back hands carry a rosary and a manuscript.<sup>1</sup>

### *Vyāntara Devatās : Yakshas*

It has been shown in Chapters 3 and 4 of this work how the element of *Bhakti* introduced striking changes in the religious outlook of a large section of the people—in their mode of worship and their concept of gods and goddesses. The appearance of newer sectarian deities as a result of the deification of some of the historical, semi-historical and mythical personages was one of the most important of these developments. With the rise to importance of these newer cult deities, the primitive folk gods and goddess were relegated to an inferior or secondary position. They are described in early Jaina texts as *Vyāntara Devatās*. In the new religious life of the people some of them became accessories and attendants of the higher sectarian deities or of their principal aspects while others, who could not find a place in the new set up, appear as their opponents.<sup>2</sup>

The Jaina religious texts enumerate the *Vyāntara Devatās* usually in this manner : *Piśāchas*, *Bhūtas*, *Yakshas*, *Rākshasas*, *Kinnaras*, *Kiṃpurushas*, *Mahorāgas* (*Nāgas*) and *Gandharvas*.<sup>3</sup> The Buddhist literature also mentions similar orders of divinities as *Devas*, *Yakshas*, *Nāgas*, *Rākshasas*, *Gandharvas*, *Asuras*, *Garuḍas*, *Kinnaras* and *Mahorāgas*. The *Brāhmaṇical* Hindu texts contain not only the names of most of these, but add many more names of such mythical beings, as *Kumbhāṇḍas*, *Kabandhas*, *Daityas*, *Dānavas*, *Apsarās*, *Siddhas*, *Sādhya*s, *Vidyādhara*s, *Pramathas*, *Gaṇas*, etc.<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by J.N. Banerjea : "In fact, most, if not all, of these different groups are common to the various early texts of India. The word 'Deva' (or 'Devatā') in the Buddhist list is of special significance in this context, for it denotes the original character of many of these beings of which the *Yakṣas* and the *Nāgas* form the most important and interesting groups.

<sup>1</sup>For a study of *Sarasvatī*, vide Sinha, B.C., *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, Ch. 10.

<sup>2</sup>*DHI*, p. 335; cf. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, p. 24 ff.

<sup>3</sup>*DHI*, p. 336.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

These two alongwith the groups of the Gandharvas and the Apsarasas occupy also a very prominent place in the Brāhmaṇical Hindu mythology. Reference may be made in this connection to the first lines of the mantra recited by many Hindus in the *tarpaṇa* and *śrāddha* ceremonies when they offer water and other objects to the manes (Pitṛgaṇas), mythical heroes like Rāma and Bhīṣma, the gods, the Yakṣas and others. These three lines contain the names of the orders of these Vyāntara Devatās : Devas, Yakṣas, Nāgas, Gandharvas, Apsarasas, Asuras, Sarpas, Suparṇas (Garuḍas), Trees (sacred one), Jihmagas (a class of sacred reptiles), Khagas (sacred birds), Vidyādharas, Jalacharas (sacred aquatic animals), Ākasagāmīs (Sādhyas and Siddhas), etc.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the earliest allusions to the Yakshas is to be found in the *AV* where they are named as Itarajanāḥ, ‘other folk’ or ‘Puṇyajanaḥ’, ‘sacred folks’. In later lexicons, both the words are regarded as the synonyms of the word Yaksha. This was also their meaning in the *AV* passage as is proved by the mention of Kubera or Vaiśravaṇa as the king of the Yakshas. In the developed mythology of later times, he was also the guardian of the northern quarter (*Uttaradikpati*). While commenting on Vārttika 2 on Pāṇini’s Sūtra VI. 3.26 Patañjali appears to distinguish between two different varieties of divinties, namely Vaidika or Vedic deities, and Laukika or folk deities. According to Banerjea the names of the gods included by Patañjali in the two compounds *Śiva-Vaiśravaṇau* and *Skanda-Viśākhau*, undoubtedly fall under the Laukika group. Again, while commenting on Pāṇini’s Sūtra V. 2. 129 Patañjali states that Vaiśravaṇa had Piśāchas as his attendants. There can hardly be any doubt that here Yaksha attendants of Kubera are described. Patañjali also mentions that Kubera was worshipped iconically, for, while commenting on Pāṇini’s Sūtra II. 2.34 he refers to the temples of Dhanapati (Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa), Rāma (evidently Balarāma) and Keśava (Kṛṣṇa) where various kinds of musical instruments were played in the assemblage of devotees.<sup>2</sup>

The Yaksha worship is even now an important aspect of the folk religion (*lokadharma*) of the Hindus. The Yakshas are now

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>*DHI*, p. 337 f.



worshipped as *bīras* or tutelary deities of villages and cities. Prof. V.S. Agrawala has done a lot of work on the literary sources of this aspect of Hindu religion.<sup>1</sup> But as Sylvain Lévi has pointed out "The archaeology of India has as yet very little advanced so as to allow us to find out whether in each village the attribution of its tutelary Yakṣa is in conformity with the reality or is simply fanciful.....To find Viṣṇu designated as the tutelary Yakṣa of Dvārikā, Kārttikeya as the tutelary Yakṣa of Rohitaka, Vibhīṣaṇa as the tutelary Yakṣa of Tāmraparṇi...one comes to the conclusion that the Yakṣa is essentially a personage closely associated with local memories. Some have been brilliantly successful; and with the help of circumstances or by prestige of poetry, they have imposed themselves on the whole of India. Others, less fortunate, have enjoyed only a parochial reputation".<sup>2</sup>

*Vyāntara Devatās : Nāgas, Gandharvas, etc.*

T.A. Gopinatha Rao has collected several texts descriptive of such iconographic types as Nāgas, Vasus, Sādhyas, Asuras, Apsarās, Vetālas etc. from various sources. The Nāgas and the Nāgins had far more individualistic iconographic traits from early times, and the wide prevalence of the 'snake-cult' in India also explains their retention. We had occasion to comment on the popularity of the Nāga cult elsewhere in this work.

The Gandharvas and Kinnaras are two other classes of mythical beings of a semi-divine character. They play a secondary part in the religious literature and art of ancient India. One of the earliest references to the former is to be found in the same section of the *AV* (VIII. 10) which alludes to the Yakshas and the Nāgas.

It is not possible here to discuss other categories of the Vyāntara devatās, such as the Vidyādharas, Sādhyas, Siddhas, Asuras, etc., for excepting one or two groups among them, the rest have got very little individuality. The most individualistic groups of them is that of the Vidyādharas. The Kabandhas and Kumbhāṇḍas are interesting only iconographically.

<sup>1</sup>Agarwala, V.S., *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Lokadharmā*, Varanasi; see also his *Indian Art*, p. 114; Sinha, B.C., *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, Ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in *PIHC*, 1981, p. 170, n. 21a.



*Miscellaneous Deities : Lokapālas or Dikpālas*

The Indian concept of the Dikpālas or Lokapālas, the guardians of the quarters, is very old. In the *Digha-* and *Anguttara Nikāyas* Dhatarat̥tha is mentioned as the lord of the east, Virūḍhaka of the south, Vessavana (Kubera) of the north and Virupāksha of the west.<sup>1</sup> They are called the four Mahārājas. The earliest epigraphical reference to the Brāhmaṇical Dikpālas or Lokapālas is found in the Nanaghat inscription of Nāganikā, the Sātavāhana queen (1st cent. B.C.).<sup>2</sup> They are Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera and Indra. In the well-developed Paurāṇika mythology Indra is the lord of the east, Yama of the south, Varuṇa of the west and Kubera of the north; Agni, Niṛṛti, Vāyu and Īśāna are the respective Lords of the south-east, south-west, north-west and north-east. We do not, however, find this stereotyping in earlier texts, where there is a great variety in the enumeration of the protectors of the various quarters or the worlds. Buddhist and Jaina texts also differ from each other in their characterisation of this group of divinities. Sūrya, Chandra, Vāyu, Agni, Yama, Varuṇa, Indra and Kubera, the eight great Devas of the early epic literature, are grouped in some later works as the guardians of the four chief and four minor quarters, or simply as 'Lokapālas'. Thus, Manu tells us that a king embodies in his self all the eight Lokapālas : Soma (Chandra), Agni, Arka (Sūrya), Anila (Vāyu), Indra, Vittapati (Kubera), Āpapati (Varuṇa) and Yama. The first list, which is later in point of time, differs from the second one in substituting Niṛṛti and Īśāna for Sūrya and Chandra in the latter.<sup>3</sup>

*Some Folk Deities*

Here a brief mention may be made of some folk deities such as Jarā, Jyeshthā, Śitalā etc. The epic story of Jarāsandha, the Magadhan king, refers to the ogress Jarā who was responsible for bringing back the discarded halves of the newborn babe (the word Jarā-sandha literally means 'united by Jarā'). She describes

<sup>1</sup>Sircar, D.C., 'Guardians of Quarters', in *Religious Life in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1972, p. 72ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Sel. Ins.*, I, 1965, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup>*DHI*, p. 520.

herself to Bṛhadratha, the father of Jarāsandha, as the Rākshasī Jarā with power to assume different forms (*kāmarūpiṇī*) who was worshipped not only in the royal household itself, but by the people in general.

The worship of Jyeshthā was once very popular in Southern India. In the *Baudhāyana DS* she is described as having lions attached to her chariot and tigers following her. One of the Ālvārs complains in his songs about the foolishness of the common people who worship such goddesses of lowly origin for happiness and prosperity when they could easily obtain supreme bliss by praying to Lord Viṣṇu.

According to Gopinatha Rao the worship of Jyeshthā is practically obsolete now in Southern India. But the lost ground was gained by her under another name, Śītalā, in eastern and western parts of India, Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, etc. Śītalā, worshipped in these parts as the goddess of smallpox, has many affinities with the Buddhist Hārīti.

### *Nandin*

Vṛṣhabha was at first the attributive epithet of several of the Vedic divinities including Rudra, but it came to denote Rudra-Śiva specifically in the post-Vedic age. The idea about the bull being the *vāhana* or mount of the god appears to have originated before the first century B.C. or first century A.D. The coins of Ujjayinī and those of Wema Kadphises prove it. Nandin, Nandīśvara or Adhikāranandin are some of the various names by which Śiva's *vāhana* is described in the epic and Paurāṇika works. In these texts he is conceived more as one of Śiva's gaṇas than his *vāhana*. Unlike Garuḍa he was usually fully anthropomorphised though hybridity in his representation was not unknown.

The anthropomorphising of Nandin began in the early centuries of the Christian era. It was an accomplished fact by the Gupta period as is proved by his description by Kālidāsa. He is described there as keeping guard over the entrance-door to Śiva's abode at Kailāśa with a golden staff resting against his left fore-arm, and silencing the gaṇas with a finger of his right hand placed on his mouth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Kumārasambhava*, III. 41.

### Garuḍa

Garuḍa or Garutmān is known as the *vāhana* of Viṣṇu. In the Sātvata list of the 39 incarnations of the god he appears as Vihaṅgama and Amṛtahaṇa, the god's 9th and 18th *avatāras*. He was originally the Sun conceived as a bird. A Ṛgvedic hymn (I.164.46) describes the celestial Garutmān as endowed with beautiful wings (*divyaḥ sa suparṇo Garutmān*). Garuḍa's another name is Tārksya in the epic and Paurāṇika literature. The *Mbh.* (Ādiparvan, Chs. 43-50) narrates the story of the stealing of amṛta or nectar by Garuḍa who undertook this task for the Nāgas in order that they would release Vinatā from Kadru's bondage. Vinatā was set free as stipulated but the Nāgas were deprived of the nectar which was stolen by Indra. The tongues of the Nāgas were cleft asunder, and remained so ever afterwards, because they licked up the sharp-edged kuśa grass on which the pot of amṛta was placed by Garuḍa.<sup>1</sup>

### Āyudhapurushas

In Hinduism, specially in Vaiṣṇavism, the attributes or weapons meant to be placed in the hands of the deities were personified and represented anthropomorphically. Such representations were known as Āyudhapurushas. Chakra (wheel) and gadā (club) of Viṣṇu are found represented in human form as early as the Gupta age. The Chakravikrama type coins of Chandragupta II represent Lord Chakrapurusha—that is, chakra in human form. Śaṅkha and padma are also found anthropomorphised in the early medieval Viṣṇuite reliefs. Various other emblem such as *vajra*, *śakti daṇḍa*, *khaḍga*, *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, *triśūla* etc. are shown personified in late iconographic texts.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the *triśūla* and other attributes of Lord Śiva are also found represented in human form.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>DHI, p. 530. For a study of Garuḍa also see Singh, O.P., *Religion and Iconography in Early Indian Coins*, Varanasi, 1978, pp. 96-8.

<sup>2</sup>DHI, p. 537 f.

<sup>3</sup>For the representation of Rudradāṇḍapurusha cf. the pillar on which the Mathurā inscription of Chandragupta II of the G.E. 61 is inscribed (Goyal, S.R., *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, p. 103). Also see Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, I, Pt. 2, p. 77f.; *J.U.P.H.S.*, VIII, Pt. 2, pp. 79-82.

*Hanumāna*

Hanumāna, the monkey-god of medieval and modern India, was known in the earlier period only as the devotee par-excellence of Rāma, the incarnation of Vishṇu.<sup>1</sup> He had as yet to acquire a following of his own though some orthodox Hindus trace his divine existence even in the Vedic texts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gangesvarananda, 'Ṛgveda men Śrī Rāmadūta Hanumāna', *Kalyāṇa, Hanumānāṅka*, p. 37 ff.; Gupta, B.L., 'Upanishadon men Hanumāna', *ibid.*, p. 87 f. In the latter paper the author discusses the reference to Hanumāna in later (post-Vedic) Upanishads. The reference to *Vṛshākapi* in *RV* X.86 has nothing to do with a monkey-god or Hanumāna. For a correct interpretation of this hymn see K.C. Chattopadhyaya, *Studies in Vedic and Indo-Iranian Religion and Literature*, I, ed. by V.N. Mishra, Varanasi, 1976, pp. 1-73.

<sup>2</sup>Hanumāna is also mentioned as the devotee of Śiva in the *Skanda P.* Cf. Upadhyaya, Baldeo, 'Purāṇon men Śrī Māruti', *Kalyāṇa, Hanumānāṅka*, p. 76 ff.



## APPENDIX

### Evidence of the *Maitrāyaṇīya Samhitā*, *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* and *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad* on the Antiquity of Paurāṇika Gods

In some late Vedic texts mention is made of some of Paurāṇika deities and their gāyatrī-mantras.<sup>1</sup> The question therefore arises whether or not these texts prove the prevalence of the worship of these gods in the Vedic age. J.N. Banerjea thinks it unlikely and he seems to be right. In this Appendix we propose to discuss his ideas on this point.

The *Maitrāyaṇīya Samhitā* introduces the Śatarudrīya text with an invocation of Śarva (one of the names of Rudra) and addresses him as Śiva. Then are given the gāyatrī-mantras of Puruṣa-Mahādeva (Rudra), Girisutā (Gaurī), Kumara-Kārttikeya (Skanda), Karāṭa (?) - Hastimukha (Danti, Gaṇeśa), Chaturmukha-Padmāsana (Brahmā), Keśava-Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu), Bhāskara-Prabhākara (Sūrya), Somarāja-Mahārāja (Chandra), Jvalana-Vaiśvānara (Agni), Tyajapa (?Japa)- Mahājapa (Dhyāna) and Paramātmā-Vainateya (Śṛṣṭi). Here we not only find the names of the Brāhmaṇical Trinity of the epics and the Purāṇas and those of Śiva's consort and their two sons Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa, but also the names of Sūrya, Chandra and even of Japa, Mahājapa and the Paramātmā. As pointed out by Banerjea, the developed nature of the concept of some of them is proved by the mention of their iconographic traits, for example of Gaṇapati (described here as Hastimukha and Danti) and Brahmā (described here as Chaturmukha and Padmāsana). From this Banerjea has rightly concluded that this section of the *Samhitā* is very late. It is also proved by the fact that the *Taittirīya Samhitā* and the *Vājasaneyī Samhitā* which also contain the Śatarudrīya passage do not give this introductory portion.<sup>2</sup>

The first Anuvāka of the Tenth Prapāṭhaka of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, after quoting some extracts from Vedic and Upanishadic texts, gives us the gāyatrī-mantras of Puruṣa-Sahasrākṣa-Mahādeva-Rudra, Puruṣa-Mahādeva-Rudra, Puruṣa-Vakratuṇḍa-Danti (Gaṇeśa), Puruṣa-Chakratuṇḍa-Nandi (perhaps the bull form of Śiva), Puruṣa-Mahāsenā-Shaṇmukha (Kumāra-Kārttikeya), Puruṣa-Suvarṇapakṣa-Garuda, Vedātman-Hiraṇyagarbha-

<sup>1</sup>Vide *DHI*, p. 575 f. for references and details.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

Brahmā, Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Vishṇu, Vajranakha-Tikṣṇadaṁ-shṭra-Narasimha, Bhāskara-Mahādyutikara-Āditya, Vaiśvānara-Lālola-Agni and Kātyāyana (i)-Kanyākumārī-Durgī (X.1, 5-7). In the 16th section of the same Anuvāka occurs this three-line verse which contains the names of all these 12 deities whose gāyatrīs have been recited—

Rudro Rudraścha Dantiścha Nandiḥ Shaṇmukha eva cha /  
Garuḍo Brahma-Vishṇuścha Narasimhasthaiva cha /  
Ādityo' gniścha Durgischa krameṇa dvādaśāmbhasi //<sup>1</sup>

These two lists, one from the *Maitrāyaṇīya Samhitā* and the other from the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, contain much that is common to both though there are differences also. The *Āraṇyaka* text leaves out Dhyāna, Paramātmā and Chandra, and brings in Nandī, Garuḍa and Narasimha, changes some epithets and counts Mahādeva-Rudra twice. Thus Hastimukha is replaced by Vakratuṇḍa, Kumāra-Kārttikeya-Skanda by Purusha-Mahāsenā-Shaṇmukha, Chaturmukha-Pandmāsana-Brahmā by Vedātman-Hiraṇyagarbha-Brahma (ā ?), Keśava (Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu) by Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Vishṇu, Bhāskara-Prabhākara by Bhāskara-Mahādyutikara-Āditya, etc. The *Āraṇyaka* text also adds more individualistic traits in the description of the deities.<sup>2</sup>

The *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad* not only contains almost everything of this nature found in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, but has also some additional mantras like those of Mahādurgā, Bhagavatī, Gaurī, Sūrya, Bhānu etc., some of whom are nothing but different aspects of the same deity (Mahādurgā, Bhagavatī and Gaurī are epithets of Durgā, and Sūrya, Bhānu etc. of Āditya). The individualistic traits of many of them are also much developed in this text.<sup>3</sup> Therefore Banerjea is right in concluding that at least the above-mentioned portions of these texts were composed when the epic-Paurāṇika tendencies had become quite firm.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 577.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

## Chapter 17

# Tantrika Hinduism

### *Meaning of Tantra*

The Tāntrika literature represents a very important and fascinating part of Indian spiritual lore. But Tāntrika texts and practices are as diverse as they are imperfectly understood.<sup>1</sup> Therefore Tāntrikism has excited contradictory attitudes and evaluations. Some modern scholars condemn it as magical, superstitious, and obscene whereas others consider it as scientific and profoundly spiritual. In the Vedic texts the word *tantra* occurs in the sense of a loom. The Śrautasūtras use the word in the sense of a process of work containing many parts. In the Mīmāṃsā tradition also *tantra* is an act-process—a method of doing or making something. In the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali the word *tantra* signifies a branch of knowledge, while the writers on the sciences of polity and medicine use the word *Tantraniryukti* to mean ‘canons’, ‘propositions’, ‘principles’, ‘expositions’, etc.<sup>2</sup> The *Amarakosha* refers to the various scientific treatises as *tantrāṇi* and Śāṅkara uses the word *tantra* in the sense of a philosophical system.<sup>3</sup> In the religious sense Tantra first came to mean ‘the scripture by which knowledge is spread’ (*tanyate vistāryate jñānam anena iti tantram*).<sup>4</sup>

In the *Kāśikāvṛtti* the word ‘*tantra*’ is derived from the root *tan*, to spread, though some later writers derive it from the root *tatri* or *tantri* meaning origination or knowledge. In the next stage

<sup>1</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *History of Tāntric Religion*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 1 f.; cf. Sharma, D.B. Sen, *Studies in Tantra Yoga*, Karnal, 1985, Ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Bagchi, P.C., ‘Evolution of the Tantras’, *CHI*, IV, p. 211.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *RHAI*, I, p. 336.

it was defined as a class of texts which promulgates profound matters concerning *tattva* (science of the cosmic principles) and *mantra* (the science of mystic sound) (*Kāṃikāgama*).

### *Tantras in Relation to Vedas*

Although later Tāntrika writers wanted to base their doctrines on the Vedas, the orthodox followers of the Vedic tradition invariably stressed their anti-Vedic character. The common obsession of many modern educated people, both foreign and Indian, is also that the Tantras should be evaluated apart from a general scheme of values to which Hinduism subscribes.

Further, in the popular mind Śāktism and Tantra have become so much identified that the word Tantra is almost reserved for the religious literature of the Śāktas while the term Āgama is confined to that of the Śaivas and Saṃhitā, Kāṇḍa or Rātra to that of the Vaiṣṇavas. Winternitz says : "When we speak of Tantra, we think primarily of the sacred books of the Śāktas". It has also been argued that the conventional division of the Brāhmaṇical religious literature was into Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Tantra, arranged in chronological order and assigned to the four ages of the world. Against this view it has been rightly pointed out by scholars like John Woodroffe, Gopinātha Kavirāja, G.C. Pande and a host of others that :

(a) The Tantras regard themselves as Veda, Śruti or Āgama, 'revelation'; as opposed to Smṛti or Nigama, 'tradition'. They are usually defined as '*Śrutiśākhāviśeṣaḥ*', a particular branch of the Vedas. According to Bagchi one of the oldest Tantras available in manuscript form, *Niśvāsatattva Saṃhitā*, holds that the Tantra is the culmination of the esoteric science of the Vedānta and the Sāṃkhya.<sup>1</sup> The *Piṅgalāmata*, which is an equally old Tāntrika text, says 'The Tantra, first communicated by Śiva, came down through tradition. It is Āgama with the characteristics of Chandas (Vedas)'. The *Prapañchasāra* and other Tantras cite Vaidika mahāvākyas and mantras: and as mantras are a part of the Vedas, says the *Meru Tantra*, the Tantra is a part of the Vedas. The *Niruttara Tantra* calls Tantra the fifth Veda, and Kaulāchāra

<sup>1</sup>Bagchi, *op. cit.*, p. 212.



the fifth āśrama, which follows all others. The *Matsyasūkta-mahā-tantra* says that the disciple must be of pure soul and a knower of the Vedas. He who is devoid of Vaidika-kriyā is disqualified. The *Gandharva Tantra* says that the Tāntrika sādḥaka must be a believer in the Vedas, ever attached to Brahman, living in Brahman and taking shelter with Brahman. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* describes the Tantra as Vedātmaka (Vedic in spirit) and says that there is no knowledge higher than that of the Vedas and no doctrine equal to the Kaula.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Rudrayāmala* the supreme goddess is of the Atharvavedic group. The *Kulārṇava* also emphasises the Vedic origin of Tantra. Bhaskarārya considers the Tantras to be the supplements of the Upanishads. Natanānandanātha, in his commentary on the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa*, has attempted to trace the origin of the Tāntrika mantras to the Vedas. Lakshmīdhara has quoted extracts from the *TS* and explained them as having reference to Śrīvidyā. The use of the Vedic mantras in the Tāntrika practices suggests the same thing. We also come across Tāntrika adaptations of the Vedic Gāyatrī-mantras for invocation of different deities.<sup>2</sup>

(b) The division of Brāhmaṇical literature into Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Tantra does not mean, however, that these different types have nothing in common between them. While some Tantras are modelled after Purāṇas some portions of the Purāṇa literature read almost like a Tantra manual. It means that the Tāntrika forms existed during, if not before, the Purāṇas. Therefore the theory that the Tāntrika age followed the Paurāṇika age is not wholly correct.

(c) The attitude in the Tantras is basically similar to that of the Vedas. The religion of the Vedic Samhitās was ritualistic. As we have shown in the first volume of the present work, in course of time it developed into a highly mystical ritual, a sort of magical operation, independent of the gods, efficacious by its own force, and capable of producing good as well as bad effects. Correct recitation of the mantras was its most important

<sup>1</sup>All quoted by Bagchi, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *op. cit.*, p. 164 f.

aspect. The Tāntrika sādhanā also seeks attainment of ascendancy over the forces of nature by esoteric ritual of the Vedic type, as well as by esoteric Yaugika practices, its aim being the union of Śiva and Śakti. The beginning of this type of esoteric ritual is found as early as the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upanishads*. Kullūkabhaṭṭa in his commentary on *Manu* II.1 divided traditional knowledge into Vedic and Tāntrika, and this division was not baseless. But in course of time this double framework has ceased to be double and has been assimilated into one organic whole.<sup>1</sup> That being so, it will not do to look upon the Tantra simply as a gift of China, Tibet or some other foreign source.<sup>2</sup>

(d) The 'left-handed' practices (*vāmāchāra*), do not exhaust the whole content of Tāntrikism. The *Kulārṇava Tantra*, for instance describes as many as seven paths or āchāras, starting with Vedāchāra and ending with Kaula. Some other Tantras add two more namely aghora and yoga. Actually the word 'tantra' is as wide as it is varied, and embraces not only the Śākta, but the Śaiva, Vaishṇava, Saura, Gāṇapatya and Buddhist forms (with their numerous sub-species) also.

### *Basic Tenets of Tantra*

A fair idea of the general Tāntrika principles may be had from the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, one of the most popular and well-known Tāntrika texts. According to it Brahman is nothing but Śakti, the eternal dynamic source of all beings. "It is perceived that all life proceeds from the womb of a woman; so we should think of the ultimate creative principles in terms of the 'mother' and not of the 'father'. Philosophical concepts like Prakṛiti and Māyā, and mythological figures like Pārvatī, Durgā, Lakshmī and Rādhā constitute the female principle of creation, and are merely different names of the Jaganmātā (Mother of the Word). All gods, including Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, are contained in and issue out of the Divine Mother. This sect, therefore, looks upon every woman as an incarnation of the Universal Mother".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Pratyagatmananda, Swami, 'Tantra as a Way of Realization', *CHI*, IV, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup>We have already discussed the theory of the foreign origin of Tāntrikism in *RHAI*, I, p. 337 f.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, H.D., *AIK*, p. 31.

The Tantras say that Śiva without Śakti is a lifeless corpse (*śava*), because wisdom cannot move without power. But at the same time it is also emphasised that the relation between Śiva, who is the possessor of Śakti, and Śakti Herself is one of identity; the one cannot be without the other. In other words the highest reality has been conceived as the union of the primeval Male and Female Principles. Śiva is commonly said to be the male principle, and Śakti the female principle. The man who worships the male principle is a Śaiva; and he who worships the female principle, is called a Śākta. In Buddhist Tāntrikism Upāya and Prajñā correspond to the principles of Śiva and Śakti respectively.<sup>1</sup> When Śiva is worshipped, His consort is also worshipped; for the two are inseparable. For the same reason, when Śakti is worshipped Śiva is also worshipped.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Śaktivāda forms the corner-stone of the philosophy of the Tantras. The activities of Śakti, the Primordial Female Energy, underlie the variegated forms and phenomena of the universe. It is through these forms that man can ascend and find his consummation with the Universal Principle.<sup>3</sup>

“The Śaiva Āgamas, the Vaishṇava Saṁhitās and the Śākta Tantras agree on one point, namely, that a female principle representing the Śakti or energy must be associated with the ultimate reality or the source or locus of power considered as male. This power is not only the cause of manifestation, but is also responsible for differentiation, and hence a diversified world in time and space, including finite individuals, comes into being because of the association of the male and the female, as in the generation of the world of living things.”<sup>4</sup> The Tantras generally accept both physical and mental aspects of the world as real; only they do not accord matter or prakṛti independent existence as in the Sāṁkhya system, but suppose it to be under the control of the spirit and, in fact, look upon the body as the seat of the divine in every part thereof.

<sup>1</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 344 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*CHI*, IV, p. 250.

<sup>3</sup>Yadava, B.N.S., *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad, 1973, p. 361 f.

<sup>4</sup>*AIK*, p. 323.

*Tāntrika Literature*

Tāntrika texts are known by such names as Tantra, Upatantra, Āgama, Saṁhitā, Yāmala, Dāmara, Tattva, Kalpa, Arṇava(ka), Uḍḍāla, Uḍḍīśa, Upasaṁkhyā, Chūḍāmaṇī, Vimarśiṇī, Chintāmaṇī, Purāṇa, Upasaṁjñā, Kakshapuṭī, Kalpadruma, Kāmadhenu, Svabhāva, Avataṇaka, Sūkta, Amṛta(tarpaṇa), Darpaṇa, Sāgara etc. The terms Tantra, Āgama and Saṁhitā are very often used in the same sense. According to the *Piṅgalāmata* an Āgama is that by which the objects around are known.<sup>1</sup> The name is also explained as that class of Tantra which was addressed by Śiva to Pārvatī.

Some of the Tantras give their own number as sixty-four while others call themselves innumerable. The *Śaktisaṅgamatantra* refers to the Tāntrika sects and treatises of the Vaishṇavas, Gāṇapatyas, Śaivas, Svāyambhuvas, Chandras, Pāśupatas, Chīnas, Jainas, Kālāmukhas and Vaidikas. The *Sammohanatantra* knows the existence of (i) 402 Śaiva Tantras (32 Tantras, 325 Upatantras, 10 Saṁhitās, 5 Arṇavas, 2 Yāmalas, 3 Dāmaras, 1 Uḍḍāla, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 8 Kalpas, 8 Upasaṁkhyās, 2 Chūḍāmaṇīs, 2 Chintāmaṇīs and 2 Vimarśiṇīs); (ii) 339 Vaishṇava Tantras (75 Tantras, 205 Upatantras, 20 Kalpas, 8 Saṁhitās, 1 Arṇavaka, 5 Kakshapuṭīs, 8 Chūḍāmaṇīs, 2 Chintāmaṇīs, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 2 Dāmaras, 1 Yāmala, 5 Purāṇas, 3 Tattvabodha-vimarśiṇīs, and 2 Amṛtatarpaṇas); (iii) 180 Saura Tantras (30 Tantras, 96 Upatantras, 4 Saṁhitās, 2 Upasaṁhitās, 5 Purāṇas, 10 Kalpas, 2 Kakshapuṭīs, 3 Tattvas, 3 Vimarśiṇīs, 3 Chūḍāmaṇīs, 2 Dāmaras, 2 Yāmalas, 5 Uḍḍālas, 2 Avataṇas, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 3 Amṛtas, 3 Darpaṇas, and 3 Kalpas); (iv) 122 Gāṇapatya Tantras (50 Tantras, 25 Upatantras, 2 Purāṇas, 3 Sāgaras, 3 Darpaṇas, 5 Amṛtas, 9 Kalpakas, 3 Kakshapuṭīs, 2 Vimarśiṇīs, 2 Tattvas, 2 Uḍḍīśas, 3 Chūḍāmaṇīs, 3 Chintāmaṇīs, 1 Dāmara, 1 Chandrayāmala, and 8 Pāñcharātras), and (v) 39 Bauddha Tantras (not quite clear in the text) (5 Avataṇakas, 5 Sūktas, 2 Chintāmaṇīs, 9 Purāṇas, 3 Upasaṁjñās, 2 Kakshapuṭīs, 3 Kalpadrumas, 2 Kāmadhenus, 3 Svabhāvas, and 5 Tattvas).<sup>2</sup> These numbers are obviously fictitious, but they

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *History of Tāntric Religion (HTR)*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Bagchi, in *CHI*, IV, p. 221 f.



indicate that the author of the *Sammohanatantra* had a vague idea of the various Tāntrika sects and their texts.

The Tāntrika texts are classified according to the mythological periods of time or according to the geographical divisions. In the *Mahāsiddhasāratāntra* Bhāratavarsha and its adjoining regions are divided into three krāntās or divisions, viz. Viṣṇu-krāntā, Rathakrāntā and Aśvakrāntā. Each of these krāntās, it is said, has 64 Tantras. A classification of Tāntrika texts on the basis of the three currents of Tāntrika tradition—dakṣiṇa (characterized by sattva), vāma (characterized by rajas) and madhyama (characterized by tamas)—is also found, each of which is again subdivided into two classes, inner (*hārda*) and outer (*bāhya*).<sup>1</sup>

Tāntrika texts in their present form mostly belong to the medieval and late medieval period. However, manuscripts of several Tāntrika works written in Gupta characters are available. The Śaiva Āgamas of the South are mentioned in a Kailāśanātha temple inscription of Rājasiṃhavarman (6th cent. A.D.).<sup>2</sup> The antiquity of the Buddhist Tāntrika texts has already been noted in the first volume of this work.<sup>3</sup>

The origin and development of Hindu Tāntrikism was intimately connected with the rise of Śaivism and the Pāñcharātra, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga providing them with a philosophical background. The Pāñcharātra literature shows that it was regarded as a Tantra. The *Sāttvata Saṃhitā*, studied by R.G. Bhandarkar, describes the system as *rahasyāmnāya* 'a secret method of sādhanā'.<sup>4</sup> The text also describes the mystic modes of worship by means of mantras and mystic arrangement of latters and formulas and the meditations on them. In the *Māheśvara-tantra* it is stated that the Pāñcharātra Saṃhitās are 25 in number. But Schrader has compiled a list of 224 Pāñcharātra texts variously classed as Saṃhitās, Tantras and Āgamas.<sup>5</sup>

Śaivism supplied a more propitious ground for the development of Tāntrikism. The school possessed a considerable literature

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *op. cit.*, p. 37 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>RHAI, I, 341 f.

<sup>4</sup>Bagchi, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup>Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

called Āgamas supposedly transmitted by Rudra or Sadāśiva himself. According to one tradition Āgamas, also called Śiva Tantras, are eighteen in number. They are (1) *Vijaya*, (2) *Niśvāsa*, (3) *Svāyambhuva*, (4) *Vātula*, (5) *Vīrabhadra*, (6) *Raurava*, (7) *Mākuṭa*, (8) *Vīreśa*, (9) *Chandrahāsa*, (10) *Jñāna*, (11) *Mukha-bim̐ba*, (12) *Prodgīta*, (13) *Lalitā*, (14) *Siddha*, (15) *Santāna*, (16) *Sarvodbhāta*, (17) *Kiraṇa* and (18) *Parameśvara*. The *Niśvāsatantra* mentions ten more Śiva Tantras: (1) *Kāmika*, (2) *Yagada* (?), (3) *Divya*, (4) *Karaṇa* (*Kiraṇa*?), (5) *Ajita*, (6) *Dīpta*, (7) *Sūkshma*, (8) *Sahasra*, (9) *Asta*(?) and (10) *Amśubheda*.<sup>1</sup>

The Āgamas or Śiva Tantras have ritualistic character. They deal with homa, abhisheka, dikshā, yajñaprakaraṇa, method of erecting a Śiva temple, mode of worshipping Śiva, yoga, mukti (salvation), etc. These texts believe that for sādhanā there is need of exoteric ritual of the Vedic type as well as of esoteric practices like yoga, that the aim of sādhanā is the attainment of mukti and that the highest caste, the Brāhmaṇa, is alone eligible for it.

According to P.C. Bagchi the next phase in the development of the Tantras is probably represented by Yāmālas. The principal Yāmālas are: *Rudra*, *Kanda* (*Skanda*), *Brahmā*, *Vishṇu*, *Yama*, *Vāyu*, *Kubera* and *Indra*. Whereas the Śiva Tantras or Āgamas represent the Rudra or Sadāśiva tradition, the Yāmālas represent the Bhairava tradition, for they are said to have been communicated by the eight Bhairavas (*Svachchhanda*, *Krodha*, *Unmatta*, *Ugra*, *Kapālin*, *Jhaṅkāra*, *Śekhara*, and *Vijaya*) who were probably emancipated human teachers. Two other old texts, *Piṅgalā-mata* and *Jayadratha Yāmala*, also belong to the Yāmala group.<sup>2</sup>

The Yāmālas indicate a great development in the Tāntrika sādhanā. They try to define the various Tāntrika traditions and introduce a great variety of cults of new gods and goddesses. The *Brahmā Yāmala* gives an interesting account of the transmission of the Tāntrika lore in which many Atharvan Brāhmaṇas as well as a Śūdra named Sīsaṁsa also figure.<sup>3</sup>

Tāntrika subjects have been incorporated in several Purāṇas

<sup>1</sup>CHI, IV, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

also. Aparārka quotes a passage from the *Devīpurāṇa* where in the qualification of a Sthāpaka (one who performs the installation of God) is considered in terms of his ability in Tāntrika rituals. The *Agni P.* states that the worship of Viṣṇu and other gods should follow the Vaidikī, Tāntrikī or Mīśra way, the first and third being for the three higher varṇas and the second for the Śūdras. The *Kālikā P.* describes in detail mantras, mudrās, kavachas, nyāsas, etc. The *Bhāgavata P.* describes Tāntrikī dīkshā etc.<sup>1</sup> Many Tāntrika elements are found in the Later or New Upanishads and medieval Nibandhas.<sup>2</sup>

In form an ordinary Tantra is somewhat similar to a Purāṇa since, theoretically atleast, it discusses five subjects (*pāñchalakṣaṇas*): the creation and dissolution of the universe, the worship of gods, the attainment of supernatural powers and union with the Supreme Being. But here the mythological elements are missing. Further, the Tantras deal with many other topics namely, ascertainment of mantra, installation of deities, tīrthas, duties of the different āśramas, support of Brāhmaṇas, maintenance of other creatures, yantras, theogonic speculations, location of heavenly bodies, traditional history, vratas, cleanliness and uncleanness, delineation of hells, cycles of existence, signs of masculinity and femineity, duties of kings, modes of charity, yugadharma, customs or legal procedure and spiritual elevation. These contents are classified into four *pādas*: *jñāna* (philosophical and occult doctrines), *yoga* (meditation to acquire magic powers), *kriyā* (activities connected with temple-building and idol-worship) and *charyā* (observances, rites, etc.).<sup>3</sup>

#### *Tāntrika Sādhana : Mantras, Yantras, Chakras etc. and Dīkshā*

The essence of Tantra is mantra and its result is Devatā-sākshātkāra. The deity or devatā is conceived in three grades. At the gross (*sthūla*) level the deity may be imaged in a specific form. At the subtle (*sūkṣma*) level it is nothing except mantra. At the highest (*para*) level the deity is identical with consciousness. At the first level worship is external. At the second it consists of the

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 39 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Supra*, p. 42 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, H.D., in *AIK*, p. 316.

repetition of the mantra. Mantra is not physical vibration of an audible kind which is called (*dhvani*) or a sound symbol with a conventional significance. Behind the physical sound and conventional linguistic symbol there lies *nāda* which is like an echo in empty space—an expression of supramental self-consciousness. Thus mantra is the mind oriented towards its own source.<sup>1</sup> It was believed that certain mystic words, which, were supposed to stand for certain deities, would bring before the *sādhaka*'s eye an image of the divinity concerned. Starting with a single letter, the mantra might consist of a string (*mālā*, garland) of such letters. Not only each deity but each aspect of the deity has its own special *bījamantra*.

Apart from mantras Tāntrikism lays stress upon the yantras (i.e. diagrams of the symbolic representation of the body of the deity along with his or her *bījamantra* drawn on paper or metal plate or inscribed or painted on a precious stone), *mudrās* (i.e. special positions of fingers and movements of hands) and *nyāsas* (placing the different parts of the divine body on the different parts of one's own body by touching them with finger-tips and the palm). These are the means by which the *sādhaka* invokes and identifies himself with his *isṭadevatā*.<sup>2</sup> The body of a deity is supposedly composed of the letters of the alphabet (*lipi*), the number being generally fixed at fifty. A *sādhaka* finds a correspondence between the different parts of his own body and the letters of the alphabet that make up the divine body. By *nyāsa* he places these letters in different parts of his own body and considers himself to be possessed of a body of mantras. By *prāṇāyāma* (regulation of breath) he drives the evil (*pāpapurusha*) that is in his own self out. Then his body becomes fit to receive the 'mother' letters (*mātṛkāmantra*) in the various external (*bāhya*) parts of the body and in the differently numbered petals of the various lotus-centres or *chakras* inside the bodily system. The six *chakras* in the body are: (1) *mūlādhāra*, above the organ of generation, (2) *svādhiṣṭhāna* (above the previous one), (3) *maṇipura* (in the spinal cord opposite the navel), (4) *anahata* (opposite the heart), (5) *viśuddha* (opposite the base of the throat) and (6) *ājñā* (opposite

<sup>1</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 154 f.

<sup>2</sup>Choudhary, K.P.S., 'Tāntric Mysticism', *Vedānta Kesari*, LI, No. 5, 1964, pp. 313-19.



the junction of the eyebrows). There are other centres, sixteen or more, beyond the *ājñā*.<sup>1</sup>

The language of the tantras sometimes being enigmatical and having both exoteric and esoteric meanings, *dīkshā* (initiation) by a proper guru is regarded essential for their proper understanding.<sup>2</sup> It is the guru who opens the eyes of the disciple to the true meaning of texts and guides him through the devious and dangerous practices to the realm of light. With the help of the guru the bound soul (*paśu*) heroically (with *vīrabhāva*) attains the divine status (*divyabhāva*) that is latent in every finite spirit. The characteristics of a proper guru and also of a good disciple are explained in detail in the Tāntrika texts. It is also laid down that the mode of *dīkshā* should vary according to the disposition of the preceptor and the disciple.

### *Tāntrika Sādhana* : Three Bhāvas, Pañchamakāras and Seven Āchāras

The Tantras classify mankind mainly under three heads, viz. the man with a *divyabhāva* or divine disposition, the man with a *vīrabhāva* or heroic disposition, and the man with a *paśubhāva* or animal disposition. The man of *divya* or divine disposition is above all dualities and distinctions. The *Kāmākhyātantra* says that such a man is the beloved of all and is sparing in his words, quiet, steady, sagacious and attentive to all. The man with *vīra* or heroic *bhāva* is physically strong, courageous, intelligent, and enterprising. He inspires fear in the man of *paśu* disposition and is pure in his motive. The man with *paśubhāva* lives a life of routine. He follows the conventional morality of society and is a slave to his six enemies—lust, anger, greed, pride, illusion and envy.<sup>3</sup>

According to the *Kulārnavatantra* these three dispositions fall into seven subdivisions (*āchāras*), four being included within the *paśubhāva*, two in the *vīrabhāva* and one in the *divyabhāva*. The first group of four is constituted by Vedāchāra, Vaishnavāchāra,

<sup>1</sup>CHI, IV, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Suryakanta, 'Tāntric Dīkṣā', *ABORI*, XXXV, 1954, pp. 10-19; Sharma, D.B. Sen, *Studies in Tantra Yoga*, Karnal, 1985, p. 65 ff.

<sup>3</sup>CHI, IV, p. 242 f.

Śaivāchāra and Dakṣiṇāchāra (sometimes the whole group is collectively described as Dakṣiṇāchāra); the second group of two is made up of Vāmāchāra and Siddhāntāchāra; and the last solitary stage is constituted by Kaulāchāra.<sup>1</sup> In the first group external worship, devotion to Viṣṇu, meditation on Śiva, and mental approach to Devī or Śakti find expression in the successive four stages. In all these four social morality, rites and ceremonies are observed including avoidance of cruelty to animals, abjuration of wine and unlawful enjoyments, conjugal fidelity, control of the senses, austerity, practice of charity and the regular worship of the gods, though in the fourth stage the acquisition of magical powers by some secret Tāntrika rites is not entirely forbidden.<sup>2</sup> With the fifth begins a new outlook and technique, "for the correct understanding of mystic rites, generally performed in secret at night, requires proper training at the hands of a *guru* and the acquisition of the necessary courage to disregard social conventions about sexual purity, to defy taboos about food and drink, and to look upon all women as manifestations of Śakti (*kulanāyikā*, *bhairavī* or *yoginī*) and all males as representatives of Śiva (*bairava*), there being no bar to the use of any married woman (*kulastrī*) for furthering personal perfection by rites, prohibited to the ordinary members of a society, which might include the use of intoxicants and of the peculiar feminine impurity as an item of bodily decoration during worship."<sup>3</sup> In the Vāmāchāra stage the *sādhaka* tries to avoid publicity of the secret rites performed by him. "The aspirant (*sādhaka*) practising Siddhāntāchāra, however, is not afraid of following socially disapproved practices openly. He is relentless in the pursuit of what he thinks to be true, and is not, therefore, troubled by the opinions of others regarding what he eats and drinks, enjoys or hurts, for he holds that there is nothing that cannot be purified by appropriate means. The use of the five 'M's' (*pañchatattva* or *pañchamakāra*)—*madya* (wine), *matsya* (fish) *māmsa* (meat), *mudrā* (parched grain) and *maithuna* (coition)—under certain prescribed conditions of discipline could be made without secrecy in appropriate places and times, and was intended

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup>*AIK*, p. 319.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

to further the progress of the aspirant towards the elimination of all empirical distinctions and the attainment of complete freedom".<sup>1</sup> According to the *Kulārṇavatantra* just as a thorn has to be eradicated with the help of another thorn, similarly "indulgence must be forced to yield satiety and higher value". "Wine that merely intoxicates is a sinful beverage, but as the producer of a euphoric condition it is a desirable drink. Similarly, flesh that nourishes the body, fish that increases sexual potency, grain that invigorates the system, and coition that brings about a blissful condition (*mahāsukha*) and prolongs the race at the same time, are all intended to keep the *sādhaka* in a fit condition of body and mind to pursue spiritual aims. It is obvious that in the case of some gross minds they failed to serve their legitimate purpose, specially when promiscuity was permitted with different types of women, mostly coming from lower castes and dubbed as śaktis. There was, however, a general prohibition against using any woman except one's wife for the purpose of the last of the five *tattvas* (*maithuṇa*), and there were also other restrictions. The idea was that a *sādhaka* must go beyond dualities of all kinds—of love and hate, merit and demerit, touchable and untouchable, forbidden and non-forbidden, or delectable and nauseating in food and drink, prohibited and non-prohibited in sex relation, male and female friend and foe, etc.,—and cultivate not only equanimity in himself but also equality towards all".<sup>2</sup>

### *Kaulāchāra*

The literal meaning of Kaulāchāra, the last stage, is the āchāra of the Kaulas (that is worshippers of kula or śakti). The Kaulas were a branch of the Śāktas. According to R.G. Bhandarkar the Śāktas may be divided into two classes, Kaulika and Samayins. The Kaulikas worship Śrī Chakra (the symbol of Tripurasundarī) in gross material form while the Samayins worship its imagery. The Kaulikas or Kaulas are further divided into Pūrva Kaulas and the Uttara Kaulas. The Pūrva Kaulas worship the picture of Śrī Chakra (=a picture of female organ in the centre of a circle consisting of nine such organs drawn on a silken cloth or gold

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

leaf, or bhūrjapatra) while the Uttara Kaulas worship the organ of a living beautiful woman. The Kaulas worship their goddess by offering to her (and themselves using) wine, flesh, honey, fish and such other things. There were even Brāhmaṇas who worshipped their goddess Tripurasundarī in accordance with the Pūrva Kaula or Uttara Kaula way. During the worship of Tripurasundarī, it is believed, all castes become Brāhmaṇa; the worshipper gets his caste back when the worship is over.<sup>1</sup>

Kaulāchāra is described by several works as the highest ideal and the last stage of Sādhana. It could be reached only after a particular stage of spiritual development. It brings Mahāsukha. This is the divya condition in which the sādhaṅga goes beyond the likes and dislikes of the worldly life, like god himself, for whom all things are equal. Difference between pity and cruelty, good and bad conduct, becomes meaningless. Just as in one Upanishad it is stated that to one who has attained Brahmajñāna no sin attaches for any kind of act, so the Tantras place the Kaula (= worshipper of Śakti in the highest stage) above all moral judgments and put no restraints in his way, for he has pierced the evil of space and time. A Kaula roams in all āchāras at will being at heart a Śākta, outworldly a Śaiva and in social gatherings a Vaishṇava. He sees himself in all things and all things in himself.<sup>2</sup>

As usual we have very exalted explanations of the origin, nature and objectives of the Kaula sādhanā. In the *Kaulajñānanirnaya* (11th cent.) we have a description of the various āchāras of the Kaulas which must have developed in course of centuries before its composition. Actually, according to this work, by the time it was composed the Kaulas had become divided into a number of schools following different Yoga systems.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the Kaulas were not afraid of following the socially disapproved practices openly. The use of Pañchamakāras was a must for them. According to H.D. Bhattacharya the Kaulāchāra was of Buddhist origin and its tenets were first formulated by a dombī in 8th century. According to the *Kaulajñānanirnaya* the Kaula method of self-realization was prevalent among the

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Bhandarkar, R.G., *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>*AIK*, p. 321.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*



Buddhists and Nāthists. However criticism of the Kaula practices is found in literature from 10th century onwards. They have been criticised by Rājaśekhara in his *Karpūramañjarī*, by Kshemendra in his *Daśāvatāracharita* and by Hemachandra in his *Trishashṭi-śalākāpurushacharita*.<sup>1</sup>

### *Rise and Development of Tāntrikism : Tāntrikism in pre-Paurāṇika India*

As we have seen in the first volume of the present work, the roots of several elements of Tāntrikism may be traced back to the pre-Vedic and Vedic religious ideas.<sup>2</sup> The pre-Vedic religion of India consisted of the cult of the Mother Goddess, worship of liṅga and yonī, sexual dualism (the concept of the duality of the Male and Female principles of creation) and the practice of Yoga. All these elements were components of an undifferentiated religious and ritualistic complex, which subsequently came to be known as the Tāntrika tradition. In the Vedic religion also many elements of Tāntrikism already existed, many others were successfully absorbed and some others unsuccessfully tried to become legitimised by the sacred texts. Numerous rituals mainly sexual in character, designed to secure the fertility of fields are recognised in the Vedas. For them ingenious explanations were offered later on. Practices like mārāṇa, vaśikaraṇa etc. are distinctly mentioned in the different parts of the Vedic literature. Many of the Atharvanika practices of witchcraft are almost identical with similar practices of the Tantras. The Vedic texts prescribe Somayajñas and Haviryajñas which included libations and drinks of intoxicating liquor. The *ŚB* states that wine is always pure and hence purifies the sacrificer. The ritual of purifying the body by uttering some mantras as *bījas* while meditating the divinities on certain parts of the body and touching those parts as prescribed in the Vedic texts corresponds to the Tāntrika nyāsa. The use of apparently meaningless mystic sounds like *khaṭ*, *phaṭ*, *hum*, etc. are also found in Vedic texts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 337 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *op. cit.*, p. 172.

*Impact of Tāntrikism on Paurāṇika Religion*

From about the beginning of the fifth century A.D., if not earlier, the Vaishṇavas, and probably also the Śaivas, came under the influence of Tāntrikism. The extant Saṁhitās of the Pāñcharātras are perhaps the earliest available records of this influence. The *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*, which has been assigned by B. Bhattacharya to about 450 A.D. and which is regarded as one of the three most ancient and most authoritative works of the Pāñcharātra Āgama<sup>1</sup> prescribes rites and practices (in the method of taking a religious bath, practice of Samādhi and mantra-nyāsa, worship of Viṣṇu, method of initiation and methods of devatā-pratishṭhā, śrāddha, cremation of a dead body, prāyaścitta etc.) which are not at all guided by the authorities of the Vedic schools and are highly imbued with Tāntrika practices.<sup>2</sup> The discovery of a manuscript of the *Kubjikāmatatantra* written in Gupta characters proves that Tāntrika works began to be composed in the Gupta age itself. The Gangadhar stone inscription (423 A.D.) of Viśvarman also suggests that the Tāntrika cult influenced Vaishṇavism and attained popularity at a very early period. As regards the Śaivas, it is not yet definitely known when did they begin to be influenced by Tāntrikism and to produce the Śaiva Āgamas, but the possibility that the Tāntrika influence was imbibed by them quite early cannot be denied.<sup>3</sup>

However, the emergence of Tāntrikism was not welcomed by the traditionalists. It must be remembered that the existence of Tāntrika elements in the Vedic religion and the claim that the Tantras are *vedātmaka* noted above did not mean that Tāntrikism was wholly in tune with the Vedic tradition and was accepted as such by the orthodox sections of society. On the other hand, the orthodox Brāhmaṇas were opposed to it because its practices and social outlook was against the general spirit of the Vedic tradition and Paurāṇika religion both. Firstly, Tāntrikism emphasised the equality of race, caste and sex (cf. p. 414 f., the section on the social outlook of Hindu Tāntrikism). The freedom which the Tantras allow to the members of all castes in worshipping the deities discouraged priesthood seriously. Its rituals did not require gifts to

<sup>1</sup>Hazra, R.C., *Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 219-22.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 224 f.

be made to the Brāhmaṇas. Secondly, many of the vāmāchāra practices were really repulsive and demoralising. They required among other things an equal number of men and women without distinction of caste or relationship, and the partaking of the five *tattvas*, viz., wine, meat, fish, parched grain and sexual intercourse. Thirdly, the Tāntrikas believed in sorcery which could be used for either white or black purposes. According to R.C. Hazra<sup>1</sup> it was probably due to this originally strained relationship between the Tantras and the Purāṇas that the Paurāṇika chapters on vows, worship etc., which were added before 800, A.D., are comparatively freer of the Tāntrika influence. However even then a few Tāntrika elements crept into the Purāṇas. These include Mantra-nyāsa, use of Tāntrika mantras for *abhichāra*, the drawing of coloured lotuses (*padma*) or circles (*maṇḍala*, *chakra*) during worship in vows, consecration etc., and the worship of virgin girls in the Vīra-vrata. According to Hazra it was from about the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century A.D. that the Purāṇas began to recognise the Tantras as one of the authorities on religious matters, though with some restrictions.<sup>2</sup> The *Devibhāgavata* says : "For the deliverance of those best Brāhmaṇas who were burnt by the curses of Daksha, Bhṛgu and Dadhīcha, and were caused to deviate from the path of the Vedas, the Āgamas of the Śaivas, Vaishṇavas, Sauras, Śāktas and Gāṇapatyas were written as steps (*sopāna*) by Śaṅkara. In some places of these works there are some portions which do not go against the Vedas. By accepting these (portions) the Vaidikas do not incur sin." In the *Varāha P.* Nārāyaṇa recommends, next to the Vedas, the sectarian scriptures of the Pāñcharātras thus : "By worshipping me through the Puruṣa Sūkta and the study of the Saṁhitās, O twice-born, people always attain me in no time. I am attainable to those people (also) who, being unable to acquire (knowledge of) the Vedas, worship me after the direction of the Pāñcharātras". The *Bhaviṣya P.* recognises the Tantras as an authority on the consecration of trees, parks, tanks etc. The *Skanda P.* says that Śambhu can be realised through the Vedas, Purāṇas, Upanishads and the various Āgamas. The *Brahma P.* speaks of a king named

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 260 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*



Indradyumna who consulted the Tantras, Itihāsa, Purāṇas etc. to learn the method of worshipping Hari.<sup>1</sup> This gradual recognition of the authority of the Tantras is also reflected in those chapters on initiation, worship etc. which were added to the Purāṇas later than the beginning of the ninth century A.D. According to Hazra the extent of this inclusion even as early as about the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. is found best in the *Garuḍa* and the *Agni Purāṇas* which prescribe the frequent performance of nyāsas and mudrās and the use of mystic Tāntrika spells and recognise the use of yantras as a medium of worship.<sup>2</sup>

### *Tantra and Vaishṇavism*

As a result of the Tāntrika influence now all the five major Paurāṇika systems (*Pañchopāsanā*) viz. Vaishṇava, Śaiva, Śākta, Saura and Gāṇapatya, by which the present Hinduism is constituted, have two forms—Vedic and Tāntrika.

Tāntrika elements began to make their way into Vaishṇavism through the cults of the Mother Goddesses who later came to be identified with the consort of Viṣṇu. In the *Viṣṇu P.* the female principle is regarded as Mahālakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu. The *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* describes the goddess as Viṣṇumāyā, the Śakti or energy of Viṣṇu, and Nārāyaṇī, the wife of Nārāyaṇa. The Mātṛkās have also been connected with Vaishṇavism and we have the concept of the goddess Vaishṇavī as one of the seven or eight Divine Mothers. The concept of the Tāntrika goddess Vārāhī may also be mentioned in this connection. However, it is only in the *Lakṣmītantra*, a Pāñcharātra text of the 9th-11th centuries which is regarded as authoritative even by the Śākta Tāntrikists, that we find a distinct atimārgika form of the Vaishṇava cult in which the principles of vāmāchāra Tāntrikism are found clearly operating. For the early stages of the impact of Tāntrikism on Vaishṇavism we have only the *Jayākhyā Samhitā* which has been assigned to about 450 A.D. by B. Bhattacharya (*supra*) and which prescribes rites and practices imbued with Tāntrika elements. To some extent the evidence of literature is supported by the fragmentary Gangadhar inscription of the Mālava year 480 (423 A.D.) which

<sup>1</sup>All quoted by Hazra, *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 262.



records that one Mayūrāksha caused to be built for the sake of his religious merit "this very terrible abode full of Dākinis of the Divine Mothers, who utter loud and tremendous shouts in joy (and) who stir up the (very) oceans with the mightly wind rising from the Tāntrika rites."<sup>1</sup> Here the most interesting point is that Mayūrāksha, who was responsible for the erection of the temple, was a devout Vaishṇava as is mentioned in the inscription itself.

### *Tantra and Śaivism*

Tāntrika elements have been traced in the worship of Śiva even in the proto-historic period.<sup>2</sup> According to J.N. Banerjee many of the seals or seal-amulets found in the Harappan sites bear unmistakable traces of Tāntrikism and some of the composite figures engraved on the seals remind us of the hybrid figures of pramathas and gaṇas, attendants of the historic Śiva.<sup>3</sup> In the *RV* Rudra symbolises the dreadful and destructive forces of nature. The Keśi-sūkta reminds us of the atimārgika followers of the pāśupata creed.<sup>4</sup> It mentions a class of ascetics who were half-naked, or had only short brown garments soiled with dust, kept long hair and were frenzied. This appears to bear some affinity with the practices of Rudra-Śiva and his worshippers specially since the tradition of Rudra's drinking the poison is connected in this hymn with Keśi. The Śatarudrīya verses of the *YV* contain one hundred names of Rudra, some of which allude to his terrific and others to his auspicious form. The legend of Daksha's sacrifice as given in the epics and the Purāṇas indicates that the Pāśupata conception of Rudra or Śiva arose outside the pale of Vedism (*Vedabāhya*) and the orthodox followers of the Veda did not acknowledge it readily. The Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mbh.* names the Pāśupata school as one of the five systems—Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pāñcharātra, Veda and Pāśupata. According to this classification Veda and Pāśupata were different from and independent of each other. The *Atharvaśīras Upanishad* refers to Pāśupatavrata,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Goyal, *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, p. 347.

<sup>2</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 338.

<sup>3</sup>*DHI*, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup>*RHAI*, I, p. 94 f.

the main feature of which was the ceremonial touching of the different limbs with ashes after the pattern of the Tāntrika nyāsa.<sup>1</sup>

Pāsupata practices like *krāthana* (feigning sleep when really awake), *spandana* (appearing to have no control over the limbs when walking), *śṛṅgāraṇa* (expressing erotic gestures at the sight of women), *avitatkarāṇa* (indulging in apparently unsocial acts), *avitadbhāṣhaṇa* (speaking absurd and senseless words), etc. have been condemned by Kauṇḍinya as anti-Brāhmaṇical acts. In the same vein the *Bhāgavata P.* composed by a Vaiṣṇava describes Śiva as *markaṭalochana* (monkey-eyed) roaming in the cremation grounds with pretas and bhūtas, *aśuchi* (impure), *kriyāhīna* (bereft of any rites), *digambara* (naked), with matted locks on his head, walking here and there like a mad man, bathing in ashes, wearing bones and garland of skulls as ornaments, sometimes laughing and at other times crying, mad himself and lover of the insane, inauspicious (*aśiva*) though named Śiva, endowed with ugly qualities and so on. Actually all the atimārgika sects like the Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, Aghorapanthīs, etc. were treated with contempt by the orthodox Brāhmaṇas for their Tāntrika leanings (*supra*).

Between the 10th and 13th centuries there flourished an Āgamika Śaiva sect called the Mattamayūra in central India. It was comparatively moderate in outlook. The teachers of its monasteries adopted -*sambhu* or -*śiva* ending names (e.g. Rudraśambhu, Dharmaśambhu, Mahāśiva etc.). A tribe known as the Mattamayūra is mentioned in the *Mbh.* (Sabhāparvan, 32, 4-5). In the Pāla period the Mattamayūras existed in Bengal also. They insisted on Yoga and social works like feeding the poor, building hospitals, establishing schools etc. H. Goetz suggests that the Mattamayūras were responsible for the sensual bas-reliefs of the Khajuraho temples.<sup>2</sup>

### *Tantra in Śāktism*

Although Tāntrikism has played a significant role in Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism also, it is in the Śākta religion that the Tāntrika ideas and practices found the most favourable ground for

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, *History of the Tāntric Religion*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 268 f.

their development. It is true that there is place for a goddess in other religious systems also, but in them she is usually conceived as the wife or consort of the male god, and where the Tāntrika influence is greater, she is conceived as his inherent Śakti. In Śāktism, on the other hand, she is supreme, other gods being subordinate to her. According to the cosmogony of the Śākta Purāṇas the Great Goddess, as Ādyā Śakti or primeval energy, created from her own body Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, and then having divided her own self into three parts mated with them as a result of which life and the universe came into existence.<sup>1</sup>

Though Tāntrikist tendencies in the Devī worship are traced in the Vedas,<sup>2</sup> historically the introduction of Tāntrikism in Śakti worship as early as the Gupta age is proved by the Gangadhar inscription of 423 A.D. in which it is said that one Mayūrāksha caused to be built the terrible abode (*veśmātyugram*) filled with Ḍākinīs of the Divine Mothers who uttered loud shouts of joy and who stirred up the very oceans with the mighty winds arising from the Tāntrika rites. Here the term *veśmātyugram* deserves to be noted because the temple, which could not have been *ugra* (terrible) by itself, has been so described obviously because of the terrible nature of the rites indulged in by the worshipper there.<sup>3</sup> As regards the Ḍākinīs, in much later Tāntrika texts the names of Ḍākinīs, Lākinīs Śākinīs and Yoginīs are mentioned. The later lexicons explain the name Ḍākinī as a special kind of the gaṇas of Kālī (*Ḍākinī Kālīgaṇaviśeṣaḥ*).<sup>4</sup> P.C. Bagchi opines that these subordinate deities might have been imported from Western Tibet and incorporated in the Śākta Tāntrika ritualism. S. B. Dasgupta partially supports this suggestion by tracing its root in the word *ḍāka* used in Tibet in the sense of 'a wise man'. But J.N. Banerjea has pointed out that the present inscription particularly emphasises the shouting propensity of the Mothers and their gaṇas and the word *ghoṣhiṇī* (*ghoṣhiṇī* and *ḍākinī* mean the same thing) occurs in the *Atharvaveda* to denote the female attendants of the terrific god Rudra.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharya, N.N., *op. cit.*, p. 261 f.

<sup>2</sup>Agrawala, V.S., *Devī Māhātmya*, Varanasi, 1963, pp. 239-48.

<sup>3</sup>Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 128 f.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*



The number of yoginīs is mentioned in some late Purāṇas and some Śākta texts as 64 (*Chatuṣṣhaṣṭi-Yoginī*). The *Agni P.* fixes the number of Mātṛkās as eight and also gives the names of the Ashtāshṭaka goddesses ( $8 \times 8 = 64$ ) who are worshipped in maṇḍalas. That these Ashtāshṭaka goddesses were worshipped in maṇḍalas is further proved by the Bheraghat (near Jabalpur), Khajuraho, Hirapur (near Bhubaneswar, Orissa) and Ranipur Jharial (near Sambalpur, Orissa) temple complexes of the 64 Yoginīs. With the exception of the Khajuraho complex they are round in form. This particular arrangement of the shrines helps us to understand the significance of the expression *Maṇḍalakrama-vidāḥ* used in the *Bṛhatsamhitā* to denote the devotees of the Mātṛkās.<sup>1</sup>

### *Tāntrikism in Gāṇapatya Sect*

Tāntrikism influenced Gāṇapatya sect also. Gaṇeśa was originally a name of Rudra for he was regarded as the leader of the gaṇas. Gradually Gaṇeśa became a distinct deity, was identified with a primitive elephant god, and from the creator of obstacles became a Siddhidātā (bestower of success). It is natural to expect that as an ancient tribal deity Gaṇeśa had something to do with primitive Tāntrikism. In Ānandagiri's *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* six branches of Gāṇapatyas are mentioned.<sup>2</sup> One of them, the Uchchhishta Gāṇapatyas, were undeniably Tāntrikists. They conceived Gaṇeśa as having three eyes and four arms, three arms holding pāśa, aṅkuśa and gadā and the fourth being in abhaya mudrā. They showed him as drinking intoxicating liquor with his trunk and engaged in kissing and embracing his Śakti sitting on his lap. In many sculptures he is found with Mātṛkās. The Uchchhishta Gāṇapatyas drank wine, did not differentiate between merit and demerit, did not find fault in indiscriminate sexual intercourse and did not observe caste rules and saṁskāras.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129 ; cf. Joshi, M.C., 'Śākta Tāntrism in the Gupta Age', in *Aruṇa Bhārati*, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, pp. 77-81; also Desai, Devangana, 'Mother Goddess and Her Partner,' *ibid.*, pp. 329 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 271 f.



*Tāntrikism and the Concept of Pañchopāsana*

In course of time the five major cults—Vaishṇava, Śaiva, Śākta Gāṇapatya and Saura came to terms with each other as a result of which a composite religious system known as Pañchopāsana came into existence. It was decided that each sect should basically worship its own deity as the Supreme Being but without disregarding the deities of other sects. The Tantras adopted the same attitude. The *Tantrasāra*, for example, prescribes that Bhavānī should be worshipped at the centre and Viṣṇu at the north-east corner, Śiva at the south-west, Gaṇapati at the south-east and Sūrya at the north-west.<sup>1</sup> Their common adherence to a common ideology facilitated this outlook. As a result of this attitude syncretistic icons like those of Hari-Hara, Śiva-Śakti, Śiva-Sūrya, Viṣṇu-Sūrya Mārtaṇḍa-Bhairava etc. were made and worshipped.<sup>2</sup>

*Tantra in Jainism*

Elements of Tāntrikism in the form of the Mother Goddess cult, magical rites, curative spells, incantations, efficacy of mantra, etc., are also met within Jainism and Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> Like the Buddha Mahāvīra is also said to have performed numerous miracles. But owing to the rigid nature of Jainism, Tāntrikism could produce no permanent effect on the former except that the efficacy of the mantras was recognised. Tārā was included in the Jaina pantheon Sachiādevī, a Jaina goddess, began to be propitiated in the Śākta manner, many Jaina religious teachers and monks made efforts to acquire control over the sixty-four Yoginīs<sup>4</sup> and the worship of Śiva under Śūnya-nirañjana form which was popular among the Nāthas, made some headway among the Jainas. The Jainas regarded the Nātha teachers as their own saints. Kṛṣṇadāsa, a Gujarati poet, sang of Machchhindra and Gorakha as two Jaina saints. The Pārasanāthī and Mīnanāthī sects, which entered the fold of Gorakshanātha, were in all probability Jaina sects. It appears from medieval Rāsa literature that the residents of the

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 273; cf. Maitra, J., 'Mārtaṇḍa-Bhairava', in *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 94 ff.

<sup>3</sup>For Tāntrika Buddhism, vide *RHAI*, I, pp. 336-55.

<sup>4</sup>Yadava, B.N.S., *Society and Culture in Northern India*, p. 360; Bagchi, in *IHQ*, VII, 1931, No. 1, p. 4 f.

Jaina chaityas lavishly consumed the wealth and riches donated by merchants. Hence the saints of Kharataragachchha had to introduce many reforms in Jainism.<sup>1</sup>

### *Significance of the Tantras*

The evaluation of the Tantras is a matter of great controversy. On the one hand they have been praised as the repository of sublime truths, an indispensable means to the attainment of the highest spirituality and the greatest contribution of India to world culture<sup>2</sup> and it has been maintained that "the Tāntric culture is the greatest of all cultures because it aims at the spiritual perfection and psychic development of man"<sup>3</sup>, while on other hand they have been branded as a type of composition containing unmeaning jargon, mysterious mummary, veiled and open obscenity and dark rites. R.C. Dutt<sup>4</sup> considered them to be the symptom of the 'diseased mind' of society. To most sympathetic modern scholars the Tantras appear at the most a strange mixture of higher and lower thoughts, of strenuous discipline and moral laxity, of sound understanding and primitive credulity.<sup>5</sup> The chief complaints against the Tantra are that it permitted women to enter into its fold for the purpose of Tāntrika prectices and prescribed and encouraged the use of *pañchamakāras* (sex, wine etc.) in sādhanā and thus encouraged corruption and immorality, that it advocated idolatry and made its followers degenerate into mere idol worshippers and that it increased superstition in society (for instance the *Narapatijaya-charyā-svarodaya* reveals that magical formulas acquired undue prominence in the operations of war).<sup>6</sup> Those who defend the Tantras explain away the use of *pañchamakāras*, specially of wine and sex as purely symbolic. But, as pointed out by G.C. Pande, while there is no doubt that symbolism was involved, the actual use of *makāras* was also known.<sup>7</sup> According

<sup>1</sup>Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, Agra, 1965, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharya, B., *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 173 f.

<sup>4</sup>Dutt, R.C., *History and Civilization in Ancient India*, II, pp. 212-13.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *AIK*, p. 317 f.

<sup>6</sup>Yadava, B.N.S., *op. cit.*, p. 361.

<sup>7</sup>Pande, G.C., *Spiritual Vision*, p. 158.

to H.D. Bhattacharya also it can hardly be denied that in their attempt to provide a comprehensive scheme of social life, individual perfection, and religious devotion, the Tantras did occasionally fail to keep the baser elements in proper check.<sup>1</sup> But the Tāntrika tendencies have also some notable contributions to their credit in the socio-cultural sphere. According to B. Bhattacharya the Tantras begin where Rājayoga and Haṭhayoga end. The Rājayoga and Haṭhayoga give control over mind and body; Tāntrika practices give various magic powers (*siddhis*) according to the different types of sādhanā. From this it follows that the highest degree of intellectual power which is attained after one perfects himself in Rājayoga and Haṭhayoga is necessary to follow the path of Tantra and that it cannot be, and in fact never was, meant for all. When it became the common property of all, abuses of its tenets followed as a matter of course. But how can this fact belittle the importance or greatness of the Tantra? Tantra was divided both in Hinduism and Buddhism into various sections. In Hindu Tāntrikism Dakṣiṇāchāra or right handed path is to be followed first, after which Vāmāchāra or left handed path is permitted. In Dakṣiṇāchāra strict celibacy, restriction of food, drink etc. are necessary. It is only when the sādhanaka is sufficiently advanced in it that he is permitted to practise Vāmāchāra rites with the help of the pañchamakāras. Similar is the case with Buddhism in which the sādhanaka first practises Kriyātantra and Charyātantra involving strict celibacy and restrictions on food and drinks etc. and only after this is he permitted to enter the mysteries of Yogatantra in which the help of women is regarded necessary.

So far as the accusation of idolatry is concerned, in Tāntrikism the deities are regarded as merely the different forms of the highest spirit or Śakti. They may be compared with the sparks coming out of the divine spirit which the yogins visualize and give concrete form in order that the sādhanakas might concentrate on them before being able to realize the supreme truth. Once they attain this objective, images become meaningless for them.

Some other contributions of the Tantra may be noted briefly. As amply revealed by the *Rasārṇava* (c. 12th century A.D.) the

<sup>1</sup>*AIK*, p. 326.



Tantra contributed a great deal to the development of Indian chemistry. Further the idea of bhakti of a personal deity, an important element of Tāntrika worship, gave impetus to the emergence of the medieval bhakti movement and the Nātha cult, which branched off the Tāntrika Sahajayāna,<sup>1</sup> prepared the way for Kabīr, Dādu and Nānaka.<sup>2</sup>

### *Social Outlook of the Tantras*

One of the causes of the survival of Tāntrikism as a tradition parallel to the Vedic one was the adherence of the so-called lower people to its way of life. The Tantra clearly rejects the caste system, concedes equality to women, and criticizes all external formalities in regard to spiritual quest. As pointed out by Hazra the Tantra offers to all, with freedom from Vaidika exclusiveness, the practical method which qualifies the sādḥaka for the reception of the higher doctrine of the path of knowledge (*Jñānamārga*). The Śūdras and women are not, as in the case of Vaidikāchāra, under any ban. As the *Gautamīyatantra* says people of all castes, whether men or women may receive its mantras. In the Chakra there is no caste at all; even the lowest Chāṇḍāla being deemed, whilst there in, higher than Brāhmaṇas. The *Mahānirvāṇatantra* says : 'That low Kaula who refuses to initiate a Chāṇḍāla or a Yavana into the Kaula-dharma, considering him to be inferior, or a woman, out of disrespect for her, goes the downward way. All two-footed beings in this world, from the Vipra to the inferior castes, are competent for Kulāchāra.' According to the Tantras worthy women can serve even as spiritual preceptors under certain conditions.<sup>3</sup> The five great Tāntrika teachers, regarded in the Nātha tradition as Ādi-siddhas, came from the lower sections of society. Many of the other eighty-four Siddhas also belonged to the lower castes and asked others to follow their own crafts

<sup>1</sup>We have discussed the Nātha sect in *RHAI*, I, p. 351 f.

<sup>2</sup>Yadava, *op. cit.* For a detailed study vide Chattopadhyaya, Sudhakar, *Reflections on the Tantras*, Delhi, 1978; Mishra, Kamalakar, *Significance of the Tāntric Tradition*, Varanasi; Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstra*, V, Pt. II, p. 1091 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Hazra, *Purāṇic Records*, p. 224 f.



honestly and sincerely. The upholders to the *santa* tradition also came mostly from the non-privileged social strata. This theory and practice is in virtual opposition to that upheld in the Smārta-Paurāṇika tradition. It is one of the reasons why the followers of this system were condemned by the orthodox sections of society.

## Chapter 18

# Religions from Beyond the Borders (i): Christianity and Zoroastrianism

### *Hebraic Background of Christianity*

Judaism constitutes the religious doctrines and rites of the Jews, the descendants of the ancient Hebrews. It entered India probably as early as the first cent A.D., for several small Hebrew communities existed in Texila, Konkan and Malabar regions when St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew are said to have visited this country shortly after the death of Jesus (*infra*).<sup>1</sup> Though the influence of the Hebrews on Indian religious history has been negligible, yet here a brief survey of their history and religious evolution will be useful because Judaism provided the background for the rise of two other great religions, namely Christianity and Islam, which have been of much greater significance in Indian history, specially in medieval and modern periods.

As early as c. 1600 B.C. a group of Hebrews<sup>2</sup> under the leadership of Abraham had settled in north-western Mesopotamia. Abraham's son Jacob, subsequently called Israel, led a migration westward and began the occupation of Palestine. Sometimes after 1400 B.C. certain Israelite tribes went down into Egypt where they were enslaved by the Pharaoh's government. Around 1300-1250 B.C. they escaped to the Sinai Peninsula under the leadership of Moses who persuaded them to become the worshippers of Yahweh. Welded by him into a confederation, the Hebrew

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Abraham, C.E., 'The Rise and Growth of Christianity in India', *CHI*, IV, p. 547.

<sup>2</sup>For a brief history of the Hebrews and their religion and culture in Hindi, see, Goyal, S.R., *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyān*, Gorakhpur, 1962, p. 265 ff.

tribes now began the conquest of Palestine or the Land of Canaan. Around 1025 B.C. Saul founded the Hebrew monarchy. He was followed by mighty David who in turn was succeeded by his son Solomon, remembered by the Jews as one of the wisest, justest and most enlightened rulers in all history. After his death in 935 B.C., however, the Jewish state became divided into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In 722 B.C. the Ten Tribes of the kingdom of Israel were conquered by the Assyrians and were absorbed and lost in their vast empire. The kingdom of Judah was conquered in 586 B.C. by the Chaldeans and subsequently became vassal in turn of the Persians, Alexander the Great, the Ptolemids of Egypt and finally the Romans (63 B.C.). Its political history ended in 70 A.D. when it was annexed as a province in the Roman empire and its inhabitants were gradually dispersed into other parts of the empire. This event is known as the Diaspora or dispersion of the Jews from Palestine.

#### *Stages of Hebrew Religious Evolution*

According to E.M. Burns<sup>1</sup> the Hebrew religion passed through atleast five stages. Its pre-Mosaic stage was characterized by animism which gradually gave way to anthropomorphism, worship of spirits that dwell in trees, mountains, wells etc. and diverse forms of magic. In the second stage which is usually designated as the stage of national monolatry (exclusive worship of one god without the denial of others), the Hebrews under the leadership of Moses gradually adopted as their national deity a god whose name appears to have been written as 'Jhwh' but was probably pronounced as Yahweh (not Jehovah as is popularly believed). Yahweh was conceived in anthropomorphic terms, had emotional qualities of man, and was capable of good and evil judgements. He was not omnipotent as his power was limited to Palestine. Though he was revered as the supreme law-giver, yet his religion was primarily neither ethical, nor spiritual. According to Biblical account he issued the Ten Commandments to Moses on

<sup>1</sup>Burns, E.M., *Western Civilizations*, New York, 1949, p. 79 ff.; for a brief outline of Hebrew religion vide Bultmann, Rudolf, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, New York, 1956; de Burgh, W.G., *The Legacy of the Ancient World*, 2 vols., Pelican Books, 1953.

the top of Mt. Sinai, but modern scholar generally do not accept this tradition and believe that in their present form the Ten Commandments are not older than the seventh century B.C.

In the third or the post-Moses period of Hebrew religious evolution superstition and idolatry gradually increased in the worship of Yahweh. The work of reform was carried out first by a fanatical preacher Elijah and afterwards by the great prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. They emphasised monotheism, denied the existence of gods other than Yahweh, described him as the god of righteousness and declared that the purpose of religion is chiefly ethical. However as yet the Hebrew religion contained little of a spiritual character and hardly a trace of mysticism.

The fourth stage of the Hebrew religion was the result of the Babylonian captivity where the Jews adopted the ideas of pessimism, fatalism and transcendence of God. Now they emphasized that man's chief duty is to submit absolutely to His inscrutable will. Further, in an attempt to preserve their identity as a nation, the Hebrew leaders revived customs and observances which could serve to distinguish them as a distinct people. It tended to increase the power of priests.

In its fifth and final stage the Hebrew religion was heavily influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism and adopted dualistic, messianic, other-worldly and esoteric tendencies. Now Satan became the great adversary of God and the author of evil. It was a far cry from strict monotheism and simple ethical religion of the prophets.

### *The Bible*

The word *bible* comes from the Greek words *ta biblia* meaning 'the books'. This is the plural of *biblion*, from *biblos*, the Greek word for papyrus, the plant from which paper for books was made. The present *Bible* is divided into the *Old Testament*, having thirty-nine books, and the *New Testament*, with twenty-seven books. It took more than thirteen hundred years to produce these scriptures.

The *Old Testament* was divided by the Jews into three parts: (1) Torah or Law, consisting of the Pentateuch, (Genesis, Exodus,



Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) ascribed to Moses.<sup>1</sup> (2) The Prophets, which were divided into former and later prophets. The former prophets include Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings; the latter, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and several minor prophets. (3) The third part is known as the Writings (Hagiographa)—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The remaining books are Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. This canon was not finally set until well after the time of Christ; for Jesus himself the scriptures meant only the Law and the Prophets.<sup>2</sup>

The *New Testament* was written from about 50 A.D. to about 150 A.D. Its twenty-seven books are usually divided as follows: Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (which describe 'the good news' and the life of Jesus), four books; History (which describes the acts of Apostles, particularly of Paul), one book; Pauline epistles, thirteen books; general epistles, eight books; and Apocalypse (Revelations), one book. The four Gospels, were in circulation in the Christian churches by the second half of the second century A.D. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are so similar in language and structure that they are known as Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel of John is utterly different. It describes Jesus as a god. According to it the divine Logos, the Word or Reason of God, became flesh. It records that John the Baptist saw the Spirit descending on Jesus and proclaimed him to be the son of God. Thenceforth Jesus acted and spoke like a god.<sup>3</sup>

### *Life of Christ*

Christianity has dominated a large population of the world, specially the western world. It had its origin in the teachings of Jesus,<sup>4</sup> a Jew by birth. Very few reliable facts about his life are known. The Gospels, as their name implies, were not meant to be his biographies but records of 'the good news' which the Christian

<sup>1</sup>A patently false assumption not only for reasons of literary criticism, but also because Moses could have scarcely recorded his own death.

<sup>2</sup>Smart, Ninian, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, New York, 1969, p. 342.

<sup>3</sup>Compare the transformation of the character of Rāma in the *Rāmā*, from an ideal human hero into an *avatāra* of Vishnu.

<sup>4</sup>Jesus is the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic name pronounced Yeshua. It was altered into Jesus in English.

community was propogating. Their authors were not so much concerned with the details of his career as with his teachings and the events of his death and resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Did Jesus ever live? Was he a man who somehow became deified or a god who somehow became humanized? These questions have agitated the mind of Christian scholars for a long time. Those who claim that Jesus is a myth point out that in the Gospels, specially of John, he figures as a worker of miracles possible only for a God, and himself rises from the dead the third day. The fourth Gospel also explicitly says that he is God. The Pauline Epistles and the Apocalypse speak of him as a divine being. The historicists, on the other hand, claim that Jesus is not merely a God. Even for the Church he is God *and* man, and a man, moreover, who lived at a particular moment of history in a particular Roman province. The Synoptic Gospels nowhere call him God and Pauline Epistles give him a human ancestry and human brothers. An important section of early Church held him to be a man who achieved divine sonship. And, lastly, the ancient opponents of Christianity nowhere question his historicity. Matthew and Luke trace his descent through Joseph back to David.<sup>2</sup> As regards Virgin Mary, his mother, according to Christian scriptural and orthodox position Lord Christ being the eternal Son of God became man being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of Virgin Mary and inasmuch as he is thus man and God both, so she is.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is said to have born at a small village outside Jerusalem called Bethlehem where his parents happened to be staying during the taking of a census. According to the Synoptic Gospels shortly before the appearance of Jesus, John the Baptist, a fiery and prophetic figure, foretold the coming of 'a mighty one.' The birth of Jesus may very well have taken place in the yard of a carvan-serai. The stories of the magi, of the shepherds and of the massacre of the children as well as the flight into Egypt, may easily contain a substratum of fact.<sup>4</sup> Nazareth, the well-known north

<sup>1</sup>Smart, N., *op. cit.*, p. 402.

<sup>2</sup>Vide Robertson, A., *Jesus: Myth or History*, London, 1946, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Cooper, James, in *ERE*, 8, p. 474. According to A.C. Bouquet (*Comparative Religions*, Melbourne, 1954, p. 237 f.) the story of Virgin Birth appears as an article of faith after 70 A.D.

<sup>4</sup>Bouquet, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

Palestinian town of Galilee seems to have been the final home of the family. Joseph is described as a carpenter and builder. There is no special reason for doubting the truth of the story of the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem when he was of the age of twelve. After that there is complete absence of information until he has nearly reached the age of thirty. Some believe that during this interval he lived in India as a Hindu or Buddhist monk.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. Now he saw the vision of God's spirit descending like a dove on him. He heard a voice say unto him 'Thou art my beloved son. I am well pleased with thee' The event made a tremendous impact on him and gave him an experience suggestive of his own messiahhood.<sup>2</sup> Like the Buddha he was tempted to use his powers for selfish ends but after meditating in wilderness for forty days returned to Galilee to preach. He went about doing good, preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God, calling men to repentance, cleansing them from sin, and healing their bodies and souls. He is said to have performed great wonders in raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, stilling the storm, and casting out demons. He taught as one having authority, and did not fully follow the customs of the Jewish *rabbis*,<sup>3</sup> so he incurred the enmity and jealousy of the scribes and the Pharisees, who plotted to kill him.

Jesus had himself predicted three times that he would die at the hands of the Jewish authorities. The charge against him was that of treason, of advising the people against paying tribute to Caesar<sup>1</sup> and of his setting up as the King of the Jews. When he was arrested, most of his disciples ran away for fear that they too might be captured. But Peter drew his sword and tried to rescue him. However, Jesus calmed him: "They that take the sword", he said, "shall perish by the sword". Anyway, the Pilate passed sentence upon him and ordered him to be nailed in accordance with the Roman custom to a wooden cross. The real reason for

<sup>1</sup>Sivananda, Swami, *World Religions*, Rishikesh, 1947, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Smart, N., *op. cit.*, p. 406.

<sup>3</sup>In one or two passages of the *New Testament* Jesus is addressed as *rabbi* (Master) and he certainly functioned in the synagogues much as a *rabbi* might.

<sup>4</sup>He actually preached the contrary: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's". It was explicit repudiation of armed rebellion.



his condemnation, however, seems to have been that the conservative priests regarded him as a rebel against sacred tradition and feared that his claim to being a Messiah would cause trouble with the Roman government. The Jews *as a nation* were not responsible for his crucifixion.<sup>1</sup>

The crucifixion of Jesus in 29 A.D., that is when he was in his thirty-fifth year, was an event of great significance. At first his death was viewed by his followers as the end of their hopes. But their despair soon vanished, for rumours began to spread that the Christ was alive and that three days after crucifixion he had arisen from his grave, appeared before certain of his faithful disciples including Peter and Paul (though not before the world at large)<sup>2</sup>, showed them the marks of crucifixion on his body and then ascended to the heaven. Some modern scholars naturally doubt the reliability of the accounts of Resurrection but it was certainly a very early article of faith with the Christian community. It tended to increase its belief in the divinity of Christ. With their courage restored the Christians reorganised themselves and began preaching in the name of their martyred leader.

### *Teachings of Christ*

Christianity was based chiefly on Judaism. Jesus never professed to abolish Judaism and to set up a new religion of his own. He says: 'Think not I am come to destroy the Law of the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfil'. But later on his teachings became the foundations of a new religion though there has never been agreement among Christians as to their precise nature. For this the only dependable records are the four Gospels, but the oldest of them was not written until atleast a generation after Jesus' death. However they make it clear that he included the following among his basic teachings: (1) the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; (2) the golden rule; (3) forgiveness and love of one's enemies; (4) repayment of evil with good; (5) self-denial; (6) condemnation of hypocrisy and greed; (7) opposition to ceremonialism as the essence of religion; and (8) the belief

<sup>1</sup>Burns, E.M., *Western Civilizations*, New York, 1949, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians which can be dated to 54 A.D.



in the resurrection of the dead, immanent approach of the end of the world and the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

During his life time Jesus had gathered about him a group of fishermen and labourers and other unfortunates. They took delight in flouting the moth-eaten traditions of society. They were the militant radicals of Galilee, and Jesus became their leader. His character advanced rapidly from human maturity to divine mercy. He advanced the prophetic vision of a heavenly Kingdom. He, however, did not try to establish the Kingdom of God as the Jews of his day expected. They were hoping for a kingdom that was earthly, a world-empire with its capital at Jerusalem. The Kingdom of God as Jesus taught and sought to establish was entirely different. For that reason the Jews rejected him. The Kingdom of God, as Jesus taught, is the rule or reign of God in the hearts of men and in society. God's will is done in human lives even as it is done in heaven. It is a spiritual kingdom. The conditions of entrance to it are love, mercy, forgiveness, righteousness, and purity. "Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do likewise unto them." Its coming is gradual, and not sudden. Jesus taught in many parables and statements that the Kingdom was already here as a hidden treasure when he taught.

Perhaps the most important of the teachings of Jesus is the concept of the Father and his children. The Jews of his day thought of God as a stern judge with power as his principal quality. Jesus always spoke of God as a loving Father, and of people as his children.

Christianity was broadened and universalised by some of the followers of Jesus specially by Paul, a Jew. He denied that Jesus was sent as a redeemer of Jews only and proclaimed Christianity to be a universal religion. He gave emphasis on Jesus as the Christ, the God-man, who existed from the foundation of the world, rejected the works of Law (i.e. Jewish ritualism) as of primary importance in religion and emphasised the significance of faith and grace.

#### *Possibility of Indian Impact on Christianity Before its Advent in India*

It has been claimed by some scholars that before the advent

<sup>1</sup>Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

of Christianity Indian philosophy exercised a certain influence upon Greek philosophy specially on the ideas of Pythagoras, Eleatics, Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus etc.<sup>1</sup> Others doubt it. Lassen, for example, denies Indian influence upon Greek philosophy in the pre-Christian period. He, however, adopts it for Christian Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism, and there is a general consensus of opinion in support of this view. Weber has traced the influence of the Indian conception of *Vāk* upon the idea of the Logos, which appears in Neo-Platonism and passed from there into the Gospel of St. John. "Garbe has pointed out that the conception of the Logos did not first appear in Neo-Platonism, but may be traced through Philo and the Stoics ultimately to Heraclitus. This corroborates the view, noted above, of Heraclitus's indebtedness to Indian philosophical views".<sup>2</sup>

The influence of Indian religious ideas in the western countries was made possible specially by the spread of Buddhism in western Asia, Africa and Europe as early as the days of Aśoka.<sup>3</sup> There are unmistakable traces of Buddhist influences on the Manichaean religion, which was preached in the third century A.D. A Manichaean treatise written in the form of a Buddhist *sūtra* speaks of its founder Mani as the Tathāgata, and mentions the Buddha and the Buddhissattva. Some parallels are also noticeable between Buddhism and Orphism.<sup>4</sup> According to the Syrian writer Zenob there was an Indian colony in the canton of Taron on the Upper Euphrates, to the west of Lake Van, as early as the second century B.C. These facts leave no doubt that, "when Christianity arose, Indian culture and religion was already an important factor in the region of its early activity. The similarities which undoubtedly exist between the two may not, therefore, be mere coincidences. Thus resemblances between the internal arrangements of the Christian Church and a Buddhist Chaitya Hall, the rigorous asceticism pursued by some early Christian sects such as Thebaid monasticism, metempsychosis, relic-worship and the use of the

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *AIU*, p. 630 f.; contra Keith, *JRAS*, 1909, pp. 569-606.

<sup>2</sup>*AIU*, p. 632.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Raychaudhuri, H.C., *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1953, p. 614 ff.

<sup>4</sup>*AIU*, p. 633.

rosary, might all have been borrowed by Christianity from Indian religious ideas. There is hardly any doubt that the Gnostics were profoundly influenced by Indian ideas. It is also a well-known fact that several religious leaders in the West took the name of Buddha, and that Gautama Buddha, under the title of St. Josaphat, is still recognised as a Christian saint".<sup>1</sup>

*Christianity in India : Mission of St. Thomas to the Court of Gondophernes*

According to the legend of St. Thomas (Mar Thoma) Christianity reached India as early as first century A.D. during the reign of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophernes (Gondopheres)<sup>2</sup> of Taxila (21-46 A.D.). Rufinus of Aquileia, a contemporary of St. Jerome, reports that when the Apostles cast lots as to the countries to which they were to carry the Gospel, Parthia fell to the lot of Thomas, Ethiopia to Metthew and to Bartholomew India Citerior by which name ancient geographers meant the western coast of India—Gujarat and North Konkan.<sup>3</sup> The legend of St. Thomas is mentioned for the first time by Origen who died in the middle of the Third century A.D. and in the original Syrian text of the *Acts of St. Thomas* composed at about the same date as the writings of Origen. The story informs us that when India<sup>4</sup> fell to the share of St. Thomas, he was sold by the Lord as a slave to an Indian merchant named Habban who was in search of a good artificer able to build a palace for the king Gudnaphar or Gundaphar (Gondophernes). The Apostle came to the city of Gundaphar via the harbour of Sandaruk or Andrapolis and ultimately

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*; for similarities between the teachings of Christ and Hinduism, vide Buddhananda, Swami, "Jesus Christ and Vedānta", *Vedānta Kesari*, L, No. 8, Dec. 1963, pp. 470-77; Siddhanta Sastri, Ravindra Kumar, 'Hinduism and Christianity Teach the Same Things', *ibid.*, L, No. 8, March, 1964, p. 618 f.

<sup>2</sup>Gudnaphar (Syriac version), Goundaphores (Greek version); Gudahvara (Prakrit version).

<sup>3</sup>Subrahmanyam, Ka Naa, *The Catholic Community in India*, Madras, 1970, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>The *Acts of St. Thomas* and later tradition generally associate the Indians, rather than the Parthians, with St. Thomas. As the Taxila region of India was ruled at that time by the Indo-Parthians, the confusion is understandable (*EHI*, p. 246).



succeeded in converting the king and his brother Gad to Christianity. Later St. Thomas went to the South, to the city of king Mazdai, where he was put to death when he converted the queen and a noble lady (*infra*).<sup>1</sup> Writers of later date, subsequent to the seventh century, claim to know the name of the city where the Apostle suffered martyrdom and variously call it Kalamina, Kalamita, Kalamena, or Karamena, though the place is anonymous in the earlier versions of the tale. The identification of the port called Sandaruk or Andrapolis, is also uncertain. According to V.A. Smith the whole story is pure mythology, but he rightly observes that "in as much as Gondophares certainly was a Parthian prince, and was too little known to the world in general to be named in a legend unless he really had some connection with the introduction of Christianity into his dominions, it is permissible to believe that a Christian mission actually visited the Indo-Parthians of the north-western frontier during his reign, whether or not that mission was conducted by St. Thomas in person. The traditional association of the apostle with that of king Gondophares is in no way at variance with the generally received chronology of the reign of the latter as deduced from coins and an inscription".<sup>2</sup> He, therefore, concludes that "If anybody chooses to believe that St. Thomas personally visited the Indo-Parthian kingdom his belief cannot be considered unreasonable".<sup>3</sup> According to G.M. Moraes, "it was possibly the existence of a Jewish colony at Takshaśilā that drew St. Thomas to this place. For it must be remembered that as a rule the Apostles preached the Gospel to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles, and they must have been guided by this principle when they divided the countries among themselves for purposes of evangelization. Habban, mentioned in the Acte, is a Semetic name—from which it may be inferred that he was a Jew, and it may also be argued from the fact that Habban brought St. Thomas to India".<sup>4</sup> In this connection it is also interesting to note that one of the titles of

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *EHI*, p. 246 f.; Moraes, G. M., *Christianity in India*, Bombay, 1964, p. 25 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*EHI*, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>4</sup>Moraes, G.M., *ibid.*, p. 28.



Gondophernes—*Deva-vrata*—has been taken by some scholars as an indication of his profession of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

### *St. Thomas in the South*

King Mazdai, to whose capital according to the *Acts of St. Thomas* the Apostle left, cannot be identified in the present state of our knowledge. The traditions of the 'Christians of St. Thomas' on the western or Malabar coast on the other hand, assert that the Apostle, coming from Socotra in 52 A.D., landed at Cranganore (Muziris of Pliny and the *Periplus*) on that coast, and laid the foundations of seven Christian centres in the province. From there he passed over to the Malabar or Coromandel coast, where he suffered martyrdom at Mailapur near Madras revered as San Thome<sup>2</sup> by the Portuguese. Scholars have variously opined on the reliability of the legend. Bishop Medlycott endeavoured to prove the historical truth of this tradition while, after its detailed analyses, J.H. Ogilvie concluded that St. Thomas preached the Gospel of Christ in India most probably in the Punjab, in the territories of King Gondophernes, but the story that South India was a later field of his labours and the scene of his martyrdom, is a tradition unverified, and now in all likelihood unverifiable. Dr. Mingana is rather uncertain on this point. "It may, or it may not, be true," he says, "that Thomas evangelized the Indians".<sup>3</sup> Writing in 1927 J.N. Farquhar opined: "Thirty years ago the balance of probability stood absolutely against the story of the apostolate of St. Thomas in India; today the balance of possibility is distinctly on the side of his historicity."<sup>4</sup> The most sceptical view is that of Garbe who has drawn the conclusion that the legend of St. Thomas in all its forms is undeserving of credit, and that the Christianity of Southern India probably came from Persia as a consequence of the persecutions in that country in

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Probably identical with the harbour Batumah (Beit Tumah, the House of Thomas) mentioned by the Arab merchant Sulaiman in 851 A.D.

<sup>3</sup>Mingana, A., *Early Spread of Christianity*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Farquhar, J.N., 'Apostle Thomas in South India', quoted in *CHI*, IV, p. 548.

343 and 414 A.D.<sup>1</sup> According to Smith, however, although the alleged martyrdom whether in the kingdom of Mazdai or near Mailapur, may be rejected as unhistorical, it must be admitted that a personal visit of the Apostle to Southern India was easily feasible and that there is nothing incredible in the traditional belief that he came by way of Socotra, where an ancient settlement undoubtedly existed. Smith has also pointed out that though the actual fact of such a personal visit cannot be either proved or disproved, yet it is also a fact that the Christian Church of South India is extremely ancient, whether it was founded by St. Thomas in person or not, and that its existence may be traced back to the third century with a high degree of probability. Here it may also be noted that evidences for the Jewish settlements in South India, carrying on a flourishing trade with the various parts of the world are many and are found in the old texts. Pliny's *Natural History* and Ptolemy's *Geography*, among others, mention this fact.<sup>2</sup> The discovery of Roman coins dating from 37 to 68 A.D., including the coins of Caligula, Claudius and Nero, at various places of Malabar associated with the Roman trade as well as at various other places like Arikamedu on the eastern coast of South India also prove that movement between these areas was not difficult.<sup>3</sup>

The seven churches said to have been founded by St. Thomas are enumerated by W.J. Richards as (1) Kotta-kayalil, (2) Gokamangalam, (3) Niranam, (4) Chayil, (5) Kurakeni, (6) Quilon, and (7) Palur. G.T. Mackenzie gives the same list, with some variations of spelling, except that he substitutes Maliankara for Kurakeni. G. Milne Rae, however, gives the list as (1) Cranganore, (2) Quilon, (3) Palur, (4) Parur, (5) South Pallipuram or Kokamungalum, (6) Neranum and (7) Nellakkul, also called Chael or Shail<sup>4</sup>.

### *St. Bartholomew in Western India*

When St. Thomas was active in the Punjab, St. Bartholomew, who had received India Citerior as the field of his mission, was

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in *EHI*, p. 249, n.

<sup>2</sup>Subrahmanyam, Na Kaa, *The Catholic Community in India*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*EHI*, p. 260.

preaching the religion of the Christ in Western India. The tradition is constantly handed down by the Byzantine writers that St. Bartholomew went over to India Felix. Now, as pointed out by Moraes, Felix is a literal translation of the Sanskrit word *Kalyāṇa*, meaning *happy* which was also the name of a city of Western India. *Kalyāṇa* had, moreover, a Jewish colony, dating from ancient times, the Bene-Israel.<sup>1</sup>

It is quite probable, therefore, that the Apostle came to *Kalyāṇa* because he had learnt of the existence of a Jewish colony there. But he probably succeeded in converting a number of Hindus as well, including the local ruler Polymius (*Pulumāvi*), whose lunatic daughter, according to an old tradition, he had cured. Tradition avers that this roused the local *Brāhmaṇas* who probably complained to his brother Astreges (*Arishtakarman?*). The result was that *Pulumāvi* was forced to abdicate and Astreges or *Arishtakarman* ordered the Apostle to be whipped and beheaded. This took place according to the Hieronymian Martyrology 'probably in 62 A.D.'.<sup>2</sup>

In the second century the church at *Kalyāṇa* is said to have sent messengers to Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria requesting him to send a scholar to help them in their disputation with the *Brāhmaṇas*. Eusebius (third cent. A.D.) reports that Pantenus, who was a Stoic philosopher, was selected for the mission. He found at *Kalyāṇa* a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew in the handwriting of the evangelist himself, which had been left there by Bartholomew. When he returned, Pantenus took it with him to Alexandria.<sup>3</sup>

The history of the Christians of St. Bartholomew is thereafter intermingled with that of the Christians of St. Thomas, when the Persian Church established its control over the Indian Christians.

### *Post-Thomas and Post-Bartholomew Period*

The Christian Church was more firmly established in South India

<sup>1</sup>Moraes. *op. cit.*, p. 43 f.

<sup>2</sup>Subrahmanyam, *op. cit.*, p. 5 f. The legend may contain some truth. If its reference to Polymius (*Pulumāvi*) is correct, then he must have been a *Sātavāhana* ruler of the pre-Gautamiputra *Śātakarṇi* period.

<sup>3</sup>McCrindle, quoted in *AIU*, p. 629, n. 1.

during the two succeeding centuries. The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 A.D., was attended by three hundred Bishops representing all the dioceses of the Christian world. One of them affixed his signature as 'John, the Bishop of Persia and Great India', though we need not draw any conclusion from this beyond the probable existence of Christian communities on the western borderlands of India. The stories of the visit of Theophilus and Frumentius to India in the fourth century A.D. are hardly credible; also, they had probably nothing to do with India. However, there is stronger evidence for the arrival in Malabar in 345 A.D. of a body of Christian immigrants from Persia and Mesopotamia who probably fled from there as a result of persecution by Shapur II. Their leader was Thomas Cananus, that is Thomas the Merchant (Knae Thomman).<sup>1</sup> We have reference to the Christian community of South India in the *Romance History of Alexander* of the Pseudo-Kallisthenes (fifth century A.D.) also who mentions having visited South India where he was the guest of Moses, Bishop of Adule. More information about the Christian communities in India is furnished by Cosmas Indicopleustes who, in his *Christian Topography*, states that "In the country called Male (Malabar) where the pepper grows, there is also a Church, and at another place called Calliana, there is moreover a bishop, who is appointed from Persia". From this it is clear that the constituency as well as the constitution of the Church on the west coast of southern India was Persian, and it appears that it had not as yet begun to associate the local inhabitants of the country in Church fellowship. The Christian community of this period was evidently of very little importance in Indian society, and there is no reason to suppose that it enjoyed greater power and prestige at any time before Cosmas.

The existence of this Nestorian community at Mailapur on the Coromandel coast has also been inferred from the cross which was discovered on St. Thoma's Mount in 1547. It has a Pehlavi inscription which has been assigned to the seventh or eighth century A.D. Similar crosses are found at Kottayam in north Travancore. These tend to show not only that before the close of the eighth century A.D. Christian settlements had spread along the

<sup>1</sup>CHI, IV, p. 548.



eastern as well as the western coast of South India Peninsula but also that these were connected with the East Syrian or Nestorian Church.<sup>1</sup>

With the conquest of Iran by the rising power of Islam, the Nestorian Church suffered an irretrievable setback. It had prospered under the Zoroastrian Sassanids but the new Islamic regime relegated the Christians to a class of inferior citizens, that of *Zimmis*, with all the disabilities which that status entailed. As a result it had to neglect its distant missions, leading to the complete disappearance of Christianity from the east coast of India though it was saved in Malabar and the west coast mainly because there the Christians succeeded in securing from the local chiefs a certain political status. After that there is very little information on the Church in India till the arrival of the Latin monks at the close of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Christianity in India was much influenced by the life and culture of the indigenous people. For example, the caste system was at one time as widely prevalent among the Christians of South India as among the Hindus. Serious minded Indian Christians tried to reinterpret Christianity in terms of Hindu thought and life. At a later date some of them even established Christian *āśramas*. Many Hindu rituals, practices and ideas were also adopted by Christians and some chapels were built in the style of Hindu temples.<sup>3</sup> The evidence for the Christian influence on ancient Indian thought is, however, quite scanty, though it is generally admitted that Christianity exerted some influence on later Vaishṇava and Śaiva theism. A great deal was at one time made of the parallelism between the Kṛṣṇa legend and the Gospel story, and of the supposed resemblances between the Gospels and the *Bhagavadgītā*. But now the existence of the Kṛṣṇa cult long before Christ is fully proved and no one can seriously contend that early Vaishṇava doctrines and legends were influenced in any way by Christianity. We have

<sup>1</sup>*CHI*, IV, p. 549.

<sup>2</sup>The Malabar traditions, particularly the chronograms representing the dates 317 A.D. etc. for some events connected with Christianity, do not deserve serious consideration in sober history. Cf. *CA*, p. 463, n. 4.

<sup>3</sup>For details vide, *CHI*, IV, p. 557 ff.

already discussed this problem in detail (*supra*, pp. 197-206 ).<sup>1</sup>

### *Zoroastrianism*

Zoroastrianism is the revealed religion of ancient Persia. When Persia was conquered by Islam some of the Zoroastrian Persians fled to India either in 716 or 936 A.D.<sup>2</sup> and settled at a town called Sanjan. Their earliest references in Indian epigraphy occurs in 999 and 1021 A.D.<sup>3</sup> Today Pārsīs form a very small element of the Indian population.

Pre-Zoroastrian religion of the ancient Iranians, the ancestors of the present-day Indian Pārsīs, was the Iranian counterpart of the Vedic religion. It was marked by ritualism, ceremonialism and priesthood and its pantheon was akin to the Vedic pantheon. For example, the Vedic Mitra was known as Mithra, Yama as Yima, and so on. Their greatest ideal in life was expressed in the concept of *arta* or *asha* (Vedic *ṛta*). This religion was reformed by the prophet Zarathushtra or Zoroaster sometime about 1000 B.C.<sup>4</sup> Zoroaster taught his followers ethical monotheism, declaring Ahura Mazda to be the only God. He called him the Lord of Supreme Good, all-powerful all wise and creator and ruler of the world, though he probably conceded a sort of internal dualism in Godhead. God sometime reveals himself to men through his archangels. The world is the battle ground of two forces - the

<sup>1</sup>For the various aspects of the mutual impact of Indian religions and Christianity vide Radhakrishnan, S., *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, London, 1969, Chapters IV-VIII; *Indian Religions*, Delhi, 1983 (Chapter on 'Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine'); Tilak, B.G., *Gītā Rahasya*, Poona, 1983, p. 82 ff.; Devaraja, N.K., *Hinduism and Christianity*, Bombay, 1917; Suzuki, D.T., *Mysticism : Christian and Buddhist*, London, 1979; Thakur, S.C., *Christian and Hindu Ethics*, London, 1969; Osborne, Arthur, *Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism*, London, 1959; Chai-Shin, Yu, *Early Buddhism and Christianity*, Delhi, 1981, Parrinder, Geoffrey, *Avatar and Incarnation*, New York, 1982. We propose to discuss the history of Christianity in ancient India in detail in a separate monograph.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hodivala, *Studies in Parsi History*, Bombay, 1920; Taraporewala, I.J.S., 'The Exact Date of the Arrival of the Parsis in India', *Kane Festichrift*, pp. 506-14.

<sup>3</sup>*AJK*, p. 352.

<sup>4</sup>Goyal, S.R., *Viśva ki Prāchīna Sabhyatāyēn*, Gorakhpur, 1962, p. 503 f.

force of good as represented by Spenta Mainyu and the force of evil as represented by Agra Mainyu, also called Ahriman. Man has been granted freedom of choice—to remain on the side of the force of good or evil. Although prayer or worship of Ahura Mazda is also prescribed, in main religious life consists in the cultivation of moral virtues.

The chief ritual of Zoroastrianism is the fire ceremony. It seems to have been derived from the earliest times. According to a later tradition Zarathushtra was killed while performing the fire sacrifice. There is little doubt that Zarathushtra attempted to purify the old Aryan fire sacrifice which in the Vedic hymns centred on the figure of Agni. Modern Pārsīs pay much attention to the ritual of the fire-temples.

The Zoroastrian scriptures are known as the *Avestā*. Their extant parts are (1) the *Yasna* which include the most important texts, the *gāthās*, many of which go back to Zarathushtra himself; (2) the *Vispārād*, which contains invocations of 'all the lords' for use at festivals; (3) the *Yashṭa* which are collection of hymns to the various divinities; and (4) the *Vendidād* which contains prescriptions about purification etc.

After Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism underwent many changes at the hands of the priests who were called Magi. The priests reintroduced ritualism and the worship of the old nature deities in a new garb.

The jews received the ideas of heaven and hell, of angels and archangels, of Messiah, of the resurrection and the last day of judgment from Zoroastrianism.



## Chapter 19

# Religions from Beyond the Borders (ii) : Islam

### *Life of Muhammad*

The Arabs are a Semitic people. Towards the end of the sixth century A.D. they were divisible into two main groups—the urban Arabs of Mecca, Yathrib etc. who were mainly traders and craftsmen, and Bedouins who were mostly nomads.<sup>1</sup> They were still polytheistic, animistic and idolatrous and so far as one can judge, the images they revered were not anthropomorphic statues but megaliths of the type one associates with the Bronze Age.<sup>2</sup> To some extent they were influenced by Judaism and Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Mecca, with its shrine al-Ka'bah was their most sacred city. A significant feature of the Arabian life about the year 600 A.D. was the presence of a number of wandering hermit ascetics known as *hanīfs* with a monotheistic tendency and a craving for solitude. It was in this cultural atmosphere that Muhammad was born in Arabia.

The first record of the life of Muhammad was undertaken by ibn-Ishāq, who died in Baghdād about 150 A.H. (767 A.D.)<sup>4</sup> and whose biography of the Prophet has been preserved only in the

<sup>1</sup>Burns, *Western Civilizations*, p. 234; cf. Guillaume, Alfred, *Islam*, 1956, Ch. I.

<sup>2</sup>Bouquet, A.C., *Comparative Religion*, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup>Smart, Ninian, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, New York, 1969, p. 476 f.

<sup>4</sup>As in a century of solar years we have 103 lunar years plus more than 24 days, the Christian equivalent of a given Hijri year cannot be arrived at by merely adding 622 years to the figure of the Christian year.



fater recension of ibn-Hishām, who died in Egypt about 218 A.H. (833 A.D.).<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad<sup>2</sup> was the son of a certain Abdullā, a member of the Arabian tribe called the Quaraish, an urban community engaged in commerce and handicrafts, to which was entrusted the guardianship of the national sanctuary at Macca with its sacred megalith. Abdullā died before the birth of Muhammad in 570 A.D.;<sup>3</sup> the mother, Aminā, when he was about six years old. It therefore fell to the lot of his grandfather, 'Abd-al-Muttalib, to bring up the boy, and after the grandfather's death the duty devolved upon his paternal uncle abu-Tālib. Of his early youth and manhood little is known that can be called history. It appears that in his early years he was influenced by a certain Zaid, probably a Christian Jew.<sup>4</sup> We also learn that from the age of twelve onwards Muhammad accompanied abu-Tālib on his journeys into Syria, where he appears to have heard and even seen much of both, Jews and Christians.

Up to the age of forty Muhammad lived in Mecca, a comparatively obscure individual, engaged in trade and business, and conducting the affairs of a certain wealthy widow, Khadijā, whose carvans went to as far as Syria and whom after a time he married. She born him six children, two of whom died early. After their deaths Muhammad became restless and in the words of the Meccans, he 'joined the *hanīfs*'. He began to hear voices, especially the one which said: 'You are the chosen one; proclaim the Name of the Lord'. Finally one night (known afterwards as the night al Qadr, that is 'the night of power') he had a kind of seizure in a cave, where a voice called to him, '*iqra*', 'recite'. Then came the vision of Sūra I,<sup>5</sup> written in fiery letters on a spread out cloth.

<sup>1</sup>Guillaume, Alfred, *Islam*, 1956, p. 26. Among modern orthodox biographers of Muhammad reference may be made to Haykal, M.H., *The Life of Muhammad*, Delhi, 1976; Siddiqui, A.H., *The Life of Muhammad*, Calcutta, 1982; Afzal, Omar, *The Life of the Prophet Mohammad*, Rampur, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>This is the form which his name takes in the *Qurān*. However once the text calls him Ahmad.

<sup>3</sup>According to some in 569 or 571 A.D. Vide Hamidullah, Muhammad, *Introduction to Islam*, 1980, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

<sup>5</sup>Sūra is the name of the sections of the *Qurān*. Some scholars regard the first five verses of Sūra XCVI as the first revelation.

Muhammad believed that the voice he heard was that of the archangel Gabriel. He was terrified by the experience but shortly after this another Sūra was revealed to him in wilderness, and from that time onwards he came to expect that he would receive these revelations at intervals. He resumed his ordinary mode of life as a merchant of Mecca, though he continued to talk to a few of his associates (including his wife who encouraged him) about certain ideas which had come to him, mainly with regard to the unity and absolute sovereignty of Deity, the fear of hell, the iniquity of idolatry and the reward to the faithful in paradise. At first he and his friends remained an insignificant group, but after some time he began to preach more boldly. But as soon as he opened his attack on the cults of Mecca he found himself opposed by the leaders and guardians of the local sanctuary. However about 620 A.D. some people of Yathrib (later called Madīnat-un-nabī, 'prophet's town') mainly of the Khazraj tribe, met Muhammad and grew interested in what he had to say. Two years later a deputation of about seventy-five men met him secretly and invited him to make Yathrib his home. Muhammad accepted the invitation and went to their city. This event is called *hegira* (*hijrah*) – not actually a 'flight' but a scheme of migration carefully considered for some two years. Seventeen years later the Caliph Umar designated that lunar year (beginning July, 16) in which the Hijrah took place as the official starting-point of the Muslim or Hijrī era.

The Hijrah, with which the Meccan period ended and the Madīnese period began, proved to be a turning point in the life of Muhammad. In the Madīnese period the Arabianization of Islam was affected. The new Prophet broke off with both Judaism and Christianity; Friday was substituted for Sabbāth; the *ajān* (call from the minaret) was decreed in place of trumpets and gongs; Ramjān was fixed as the month of fasting; the *qiblah* (the direction to be observed during the ritual prayer) was changed from Jerusalem to Mecca; the pilgrimage to al-Ka'bah was authorized and the kissing of the Black Stone sanctioned.<sup>1</sup> In 624 A.D. the Meccan emigrants (*muhājirūn*), with the help of the Madīnese

<sup>1</sup>Hitti, Philip K., *History of the Arabs*, London, 1960, p. 118.

(called *ansār*, supporters) defeated abu-Sūfyān, a Meccan caravan leader in the battle of Badr; in 629 A.D. the Jews were defeated for taking side with the Meccans; in 628 A.D. a pact was exacted with the Meccans on the basis of equality and finally in the tenth Muslim year (632 A.D.) Muhammad entered triumphantly at the head of the annual pilgrimage into Mecca which became his religious capital. He overthrew its aristocracy and destroyed its idols excepting the sacred Black Stone. Three months after his return to al-Madīnah, he unexpectedly took ill and died complaining of severe headache, on June 8, 632.

Tradition, which there is no special reason for doubting, paints Muhammad as a man of striking appearance with a fine intelligent face, black piercing eyes and a flowing beard. He was taciturn in speech, possessed unusual insight, was gifted with eloquence, and was a lover of children. He despised grandeur and lived on an extremely frugal life, though he was no ascetic.<sup>1</sup> He performed the most menial tasks with his own hands, and was essentially puritan. Though not a radical reformer he succeeded in changing several barbarous customs of his countrymen notably infanticide and cruelty to animals. He first forbade the drinking of wine before coming to prayer and then subsequently prohibited it altogether.<sup>2</sup>

### *Fundamental Tenets of Islam*

Of the three monotheistic religions developed by the Semites Islam<sup>3</sup> is the most characteristic and comes nearer to the Judaism of the *Old Testament* than does the Christianity of the *New Testament*. Muhammad taught that the Arabs were the descendants of Ishmael,

<sup>1</sup>Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Bouquet, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

<sup>3</sup>The name of this religion is not Muhammadanism but Islam and the name given to its followers is Muslim. In the *Qurān* Muhammad himself and all other prophets are called Muslims (Ali Maulana Muhammad, *The Religion of Islam*, New Delhi, p. 1). For the orthodox exposition of the tenets of Islam vide this work of Maulana Mohammad Ali and also Muhammad Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam*, Lahore, 1974; Islahi, Sadruddin, *Islam at a Glance*, Delhi, 1978; Maududi, Syed Abul, A'la, *Towards Understanding Islam*, Delhi, 1981; Ahmad, Khurshid, *Islam : Basic Principles and Characteristics*, Aligarh, 1981; Siddiqi, M.M., *What is Islam ?*, Delhi, 1983.



Abraham's eldest son. Moreover belief in monotheism, sanction of polygamy and the prohibition of usury, images worship and pork-eating are common to Judaism and Islam both. Muhammad also accepted the *New Testament* alongwith the *Old Testament* as divinely inspired book and regarded Jesus as one of the greatest of a long line of prophets.<sup>1</sup> Besides, the Islamic doctrines of the resurrection of the body, the last judgment, rewards and punishment after death and the belief in angels were probably derived from Christianity. Muhammad conceded that God had revealed his will to the Jews and Christians but he also believed that they could not either understand or follow God's commands and agree to live in unity among themselves.

In dealing with the fundamentals of their religion Muslims distinguish between *īmān* (religious belief), '*ibādat* (act of worship, religious duty) and *ihsān* (right-doing), all of which are included in the term *dīn* (religion). *Imān* involves belief in God, His angels, His 'books', His messengers and in the last day. Its first and greatest dogma is: *la ilāha illa-l-Lāh*, no god whatsoever but Allāh. This is not simply the belief that Deity is One (*tawhīd*); it is also the character of the one Deity that Matters. 'Allāh' is a contraction of *Al llāh*, 'the Strong' or 'Mighty One'. The other primitive Muslim name is *rabb*, or 'Lord'. From this it is plain that Muhammad's basic conception of Deity is that of an absolute transcendent power—the creator, omniscient, omnipotent being, the self-subsistent. The will of Allāh is entirely arbitrary, and can be changed at His pleasure in a contrary direction. His attributes (*sifāt*) of love are overshadowed by those of might and majesty. He has ninety-nine excellent names and as many attributes. The full Muslim rosary has, therefore, ninety-nine beads corresponding to His names. Islam is the religion of 'submission', that is 'surrender to the will of Allāh'.<sup>2</sup> The ideal believer, therefore, is the *abd* or slave (Hebrew *ebed*), and is submission personified and nothing else. This uncompromising monotheism, with its simple, enthusiastic faith in the supreme rule of the transcendent being, is the chief source of the strength of Islam.

<sup>1</sup>Islam, however, could not hold that Jesus was divine since this would be setting up something else alongside Allāh (vide Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 489).

<sup>2</sup>Bouquet, *op. cit.*, p. 271.



The second dogma in imān treats of Muhammad as the messenger (*rasūl*) of Allāh, His prophet (*nabī*), the admonisher of his people, the last of a long line of prophets of whom he is the seal (*Khatam-al-Nabbiyin*) and, therefore, the greatest.<sup>1</sup> In the *Qurān* Muhammad is but a human being whose only miracle is the *ījas* of the *Qurān* but in tradition, folklore and popular belief he is invested with a divine aura.<sup>2</sup>

The *Qurān* is the word (*kalām*) of Allāh. It contains the final revelation and is 'uncreated'. A Qurānic quotation is always introduced with 'saith Allāh'. The word '*qurān*' means that which is uttered or recited and it primarily denotes those utterances of Muhammad in which he was believed to be under the influence of direct inspiration. In its phonetic and graphic reproduction and in its linguistic form the *Qurān* is supposed to be identical and co-eternal with a heavenly archetype. Of all miracles it is the greatest.

Muhammad's earlier revelations were relatively brief. Later Sūras (as they are called) seem in general to be more artificial. The various remnants of the Prophet's teachings in the first instance were probably collected by Abū Bakr, about a year after Muhammad's death, at the suggestion of Umar, and the actual work was entrusted to Zaid ibn Thabit, an *ansār* of Medīna.<sup>3</sup> However, there is no chronological or logical sequence in the sections (sūras) of the *Qurān*.

In its angelology Islam gives the foremost place to Gabriel (*Jibrīl*), the bearer of revelation, who is also 'the spirit of holiness' and 'the faithful spirit'. The worst and the only unpardonable sin in the eyes of Muslims is *shirk*, joining or associating other gods with the one true God. In Muhammad's mind 'the people of the book' (*ahl-e-kitāb*) i.e. the Christians and the Jews, were probably not included among the polytheists, though some hold a different view.<sup>4</sup>

The reality of future life is emphasized in the *Qurān* by the recurrent references to 'the day of judgment', also called 'the day of resurrection', 'the day', 'the hour' and 'the inevitable'. Future

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Siddiqi, A.H., *Prophethood in Islam*, Delhi, 1974, p. 61 ff.; Maudidi, Syed Abul A'la, *Finality of Prophethood*, Delhi, 1979.

<sup>2</sup>The Haḍīth or Sunnat embellishes Muhammad's life with numerous miracles.

<sup>3</sup>Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 479 f.

<sup>4</sup>Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

life as depicted in the *Qurān* with its bodily pains and physical pleasures, implies the resurrection of the body.

The religious duties (*ibādāt*) of the Muslim centre on the so-called five pillars (*arkān*) of Islam. They are the following :

(i) *Kalimā*, or the recital of the creed, 'There is no Deity but Allāh, and Muhammad is his Prophet' (*supra*).

(ii) *Salāt*, or the recital of the five daily prayers, accompanied by ablutions. The Friday noon prayer is the only public prayer and is theoretically obligatory for all adult males. One feature of the Friday service is the *khutbāh* (address) delivered by the imām in which intercessory prayer is offered on behalf of the ruling king.

(iii) *Fasting*, especially during the lunar month of Ramjān. Though penitential fasts are prescribed a number of times, Ramjān as a fasting month is mentioned only once. That particular month, which may have been sacred in pre-Islamic days, was chosen because in it the *Qurān* was first revealed and the battle of Badr won.

(iv) *Zakāh* or alms giving. Later it evolved into an obligatory tax on property, including money, cattle, corn, fruit and merchandise.

(v) *Hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca. Once in a life-time every Muslim of either sex, who can afford it, is supposed to undertake at a stated time of the year a holy visit to Mecca.

The duty of *jihād* or holy war has been raised to the status of a sixth pillar by at least one Muslim sect, the Khārijites. To it Islam owes its unparalleled expansion as a worldly power. It is one of the principal duties of the Caliph to keep pushing back the geographical wall separating the *dār-al-Islām* (the land of Islam) from the *dār-al-harb* (the war territory).<sup>1</sup>

These religious obligations (*ibādāt*) constitute the fundamentals of Islam. But they are not the only ones prescribed by the *Qurān*. Right-doing (*ihsān*) has the same authority behind it. The sanctions of morality—private as well as public—in the Muslim society are all of a religious character. Basically the will of Allāh, as revealed through Muhammad, determines what is right (*halāl*, permitted, legitimate) and what is wrong (*harām*, forbidden). Of

<sup>1</sup>Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 137 f.

the human virtues it insists on beneficence, in the form of zakāh, most urgently.<sup>1</sup> There is denunciation of usury and games of chance, and of the consumption of pork and alcohol. Polygamy is granted to all.

The Muslims believe in the immortality of soul. On the day of resurrection the dead will rise to receive rewards and punishment of their deeds in life. Allāh will send rain for forty days which will cover the earth to the height of 12 cubits and cause the bodies to sprout forth like plants.

### *Islam after Muhammad*

Following the death of Muhammad in 632 A.D. his followers chose Abū Bakr, one of the earliest converts to the faith and the father-in-law of Muhammad, as the new ruler with the title of Khalifā (Caliph). After Abū Bakr, Umar and Usmān were chosen in succession from amongst the early disciples of Muhammad. During their Caliphate Arabs conquered Upper Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Persia etc. In 656 A.D., however, a war of succession broke out and supporters of Alī, the husband of Muhammad's daughter Fātimā, succeeded in making him the Caliph and deposing a member of the Ummayyad family. However in 661 A.D. Alī was murdered, his son Hasan resigned in favour of Mu'āwiyā on the condition that after Mu'āwiyā he would again be accepted as Caliph. But Hasan died a few years later. His followers assert that he was poisoned at Mu'āwiyā's instigation, and therefore was a martyr. His younger brother Husain rebelled against Yazīd who succeeded to the Caliphate in 680 A.D., but was killed with his small army of 200 at Karbalā. The victor cut off the head of Husain and sent it to Damascus. It was afterwards buried with his body in Karbalā, now one of the great sanctuaries of the Shī'as. Ummayyads made Damascus their capital. But in 750 the Shī'as again revolted, founded the Abbasid Caliphate and moved the capital to Baghdad. It was during the Caliphate of the Ummayyads that the Arabs conquered the Indian province of Sindh.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 138. For the orthodox views on the moral aspects of Islam vide Maudidi, Syed Abul A'la, *Islamic Way of Life*, Delhi, 1983; *Ethical View-point of Islam*, Delhi, 1983; Muslehuddin, Muhammad, *Morality its Concept and Role in Islamic Order*, Delhi, 1982.



Thus with the death of Muhammad his followers became divided into two major factions or sects-- those who upheld the succession of Abū Bakr, Umar and Usmān and those who did not recognise these three as lawful Caliphs. These two factions are respectively called Sunnī and Shī'a. In course of time these were subdivided into a number of sub sects and several new sects also arose.

Both Sunnī and Shī'a had a political as well as a religious character. The Sunnīs maintained that the head of the Islamic state and successor to Muhammad (Caliph or Khalifā) should be elected in accordance with the old Arabian custom. In matters of belief they held that *sunna* or traditions which had grown up outside the *Qurān*<sup>1</sup> should also be accepted as the valid source of belief. Hence their name Sunnī. The Shī'as on the other hand held that the Caliphate should be restricted to the relatives of Muhammad—related to him either by blood or marriage. Further they were against anything but *Qurān* as a source of religious belief.

There were, and are, other differences also between the two sects. Islam claims that the prophets, specially Prophet Muhammad, were without sin and infallible. The Sunnīs differ among themselves and with the Shī'as as to the extent of this infallibility. Did it apply to all sin or only mortal sin? and could the prophets fall in the lesser sins of ordinary men? The *Fiqh Akbar II*, which probably dates from the tenth century, states: 'All the Prophets are exempt from sins both light and grave, from unbelief and sordid deeds'. It may, however, be noted that there is no trace of a doctrine of Muhammad's sinlessness in the cononical traditions.<sup>2</sup>

An important difference between Sunnī and Shī'a doctrines of infallibility and superhuman knowledge is that with the Sunnīs

<sup>1</sup>The laws which govern Muslim custom (*sunna*) in everyday affairs are adumbrated in the *Qurān* but for the details and the underlying authority for these rules one must go to the books of tradition (*hadith*). After Muhammad an enormous number of hadith found their way into circulation. The first collection to gain canonical authority was the *Sahih* (the genuine) of al-Bukhārī (194-256 A.H.). Bukhārī's biographer says that he selected his material from no less than 600,000 hadith. He reduced the vast number consisting of forgeries, repetitions or dubious reports to less than 3000.

<sup>2</sup>Guillaume, *Islam*, p. 119 f.



infallibility is not a quality inherent in the Prophet by virtue of his being, but a special grace from God. His superhuman knowledge is given him from time to time by God, whose message he repeats to men. On the other hand, according to the Shī'a belief sinlessness and infallibility are in the Imāms and of them. They are the final authority in the interpretation of the *Qurān*, the source of all truth, and the only beings with the right to men's obedience.<sup>1</sup> Alī and the Imāms are in a way incarnations of the Godhead, partakers of his attributes and powers, their bodies being but accidents inseparable from their visible forms.<sup>2</sup> The Shī'as therefore, teach that the Muslims must believe in all the Imāms, and especially in the Imām of their own time. This belief was exalted to an additional 'pillar of Islam'.

### *Sūfism (Tasawwuf)*

The Sūfīs represent the mystical trend in Islam. The word sūfī comes from the Arabic *sūf* which means 'wool'. The name *sūfī* was originally given to such Muslim saints who wore coarse woolen cloth<sup>3</sup> as a symbol of renunciation of the worldly comforts. Later on the name was associated with the Muslim mystics. Tarachand has recognised five sources of Sūfism: (1) The *Qurān*, (2) Life of Muhammad, (3) Christianity and Neo-Platonism, (4) Hinduism and Buddhism, and (5) Iranian Zoroastrianism. Indian influence on Sūfism, however, was double—directly and through Greek philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

The essential features of Sūfī mysticism are not different from the usual characteristics of any mysticism. It is a kind of pantheistic monism. The Sūfīs take the union of soul with God to be man's ultimate end. This theme may look very unusual in Islam in face of its conception of God as a distant omnipotent master with whom man can have no equality or oneness. And it is of course true that the general spirit of Sūfism did not fit in with the spirit of Islam. But it is also true that (a) the germs of Sūfism may be

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Nicholson, R.A., 'Mysticism', in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. by Arnold and Guillaume, Oxford, 1931, p. 211.

<sup>4</sup>Tarachand, quoted by Dinkar, R.S., *Saṁskṛti ke Chāra Adhyāya*, Patna, 1962, p. 297.

traced in the *Qur'ān* itself, and (b) several great *sūfī* philosophers such as al-Ghazali have genuinely attempted to work out a reconciliation of *Sūfism* with Islam. In the words of R.A. Nicholson "Though Muhammad left no system of dogmatic or mystical theology, the *Qur'ān* contains the raw materials of both. Being the outcome of feeling rather than reflection, the Prophet's statements about God are formally inconsistent, and while Muslim scholastics have embodied in their creed the aspect of transcendence, the *Sūfis*, following his example, have combined the transcendent aspect with that of immanence, on which, though it is less prominent in the *Qur'ān*, they naturally lay greater stress".<sup>1</sup>

In the *Qur'ān*, despite its preoccupation with battles and spoils, there is a strong note of other-worldliness also and to a lesser degree of mysticism. In the heart of those men who longed for a deep and intimate knowledge of God, discussion on anthropomorphism and pantheism found no place. They concentrated on such *Qur'ānic* passages as : 'A people whom He loveth and who love Him', 'Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth', 'I have breathed into (man) of My spirit'. 'Wherever you turn there is the face of Allāh', and so on. Surely the seeds of mysticism are there in these passages and give credence to the claim of the *Sūfis* that they inherited their doctrines from Muhammad himself. By fervent prayer, by meditating profoundly on such passages the *Sūfis* tried to reproduce the Prophet's mystical experience in themselves. A sect of the *Shī'as* made these ideas clearer when it expounded the doctrines of *ghulūb* (the doctrine that man can attain the status of God) and *taqsīr* (the belief that God can manifest Himself as man).

The foundations of a complete theory and practice of Islamic mysticism were laid by the *Sūfis* in the 9th century A.D. Rabiā, the great female mystic, often spoke in a spirit of blind love for God: "My Beloved is with me always and for His love I can find no substitute". This sounds very much like Mīrā's love for Kṛṣṇa. Similarly Nūn of Egypt introduced in Islam the idea of gnosis (*marifā*)—of knowledge which is given in ecstasy and differs altogether from traditional intellectual knowledge (*ilm*). Being asked now he knew God, he replied, 'I know Him through

<sup>1</sup>*Legacy of Islam*, p. 212; cf. Guillaume, *Islam*, p. 143.

Himself.<sup>1</sup> The Persian Abū Yazīd (Bayazid), obviously under the influence of Indian monism, developed the doctrines of *nāsūt* (finite human qualities), *lāhūt* (infinite qualities of god), *fanā* (passing away of self) and *baqā* (the unitive life with God).

Before the third century A.H. had ended, the Sūfīs had worked out a method of attaining the gnosis or mystic knowledge of God. To many their language appeared and still appears to be blasphemy (*kufr*). A Persian used to cry 'Glory to me' during his ecstasies and claimed to have ascended the Heaven in dream. He also taught that to say 'I' and 'God' is to deny the unity of God. Lover, beloved and love are one.<sup>2</sup> Junaid taught that when a man dies, his individuality becomes perfect through God and in God.<sup>3</sup> His pupil Hallāj taught that man was God incarnate and that God is love and in His love He created man after His own image so that man might find that image within himself. His most heinous crime in the eyes of the orthodox was his claim *Ana'l Haqq* (I am the Truth) for which he was condemned to death (922 A.D.).<sup>4</sup> His doctrines brought the Sūfīs as a whole under suspicion and it must be admitted that the orthodox had much ground for complaint. A Persian mystic Abū Sa'id (1049 A.D.) regarded the Sharī'a as superfluous for those who had attained the mystic goal. He did not allow his disciples to go on a pilgrimage of Mecca and did not interrupt his dancing when the Muezzin called to prayer.<sup>5</sup> Here was a clear departure from the practices of the early Sūfīs who faithfully observed the Sunnā.

The man who got recognition for the Sūfīs by the orthodoxy and tried to reconcile Sūfism with Islamic theology was al-Ghazali (1059-1111). He was one of the greatest figures in the history of Islam. His autobiography is often compared with the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. He realized that the secret of mysticism cannot be learnt through books; it has to be experienced. The way is to practice *dhikra*, that is the commemoration of God and the

<sup>1</sup>Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup>Guillaume, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 145 f.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 147.



concentration of mind upon him.<sup>1</sup> With him an era in the history of Sūfism ended.

According to the early Sūfīs perfect detachment from 'gods' involves perfect attachment with God through love. The mystic is forced to trust in Him alone (*tawakkul*) and surrender to His will (*riḡā*). He sees the Lord in all. He experiences cosmic vision. He beholds his Beloved everywhere and in all objects. He has no sense of possession. He is free from egoism, lust, greed, anger, and pride. He is perfectly passionless and enjoys perfect peace and poise. He is like the *Jīvanmukta*, or liberated sage of the Hindu philosophy. He looks upon the heart as the Palace of the Beloved. He does not care for dogmas or doctrines, creeds or sects. Concentration, meditation, obedience to a guru (*pīr*), poverty, discipline, fasts, penances, *japa* or recitation of the sacred word (*zikr*), the use of rosary, music, rhythmic and controlled breathing, prayer, universal love, non-injury, detachment, introspection, dispassion, purity of heart, and self-control are the means to attain God or the Beloved through divine grace.

#### *Advent and Early Influence of Islam in India*

The militant character of early Islam and its extreme intolerance of other religions<sup>2</sup> marked its history at every step, and particularly in India. There was maritime intercourse from very early period between India, Arabia and Persia. It is, therefore, highly probable that some early Muslim traders, who frequented the Indian coastal regions, settled here on more or less permanent basis.<sup>3</sup> M.A. Ghani has tried to show that the Muslims came to India as early as 637 A.D. and settled in large numbers not as fighters but as tradesmen and missionaries and that the Indians were so profoundly impressed with the purity of their living, their zeal for the new faith and their principle of universal brotherhood that they eagerly embraced the new faith in large numbers, about fifty thousand being converted each year.<sup>4</sup> But as pointed out by

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>Contra, Ahmad, Khurshid, *Fanaticism, Intolerance and Islam*, Delhi, 1982.

<sup>3</sup>Majumdar, R.C., in *CA*, p. 455 f. Cf. for details Lal, K.S., *Early Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1984.

<sup>4</sup>*POC*, X, p. 403.



R.C. Majumdar the evidence cited by Ghani is not reliable.<sup>1</sup> However, it may be admitted that the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad ibn-Qāsim in 712 A.D. opened the gate of Muslim colonisation in this region. They followed a deliberate policy of making Islam a dominant force in Sindh both by settlements and local conversions with the help of humiliation and terrorisation of the conquered combined with material inducements to them. According to the *Chach-nāmā* "He who received the honour of Islam and became a convert was exempt from slavery as well as tribute and was not injured. Those, however, who did not accept the true faith were compelled to pay the fixed tribute (*jizīa*)".<sup>2</sup> This attitude served as a general pattern of Muslim policy towards the subject Hindus in subsequent ages.

However, as S.R. Sharma points out, considering the swiftness of the career of Muslim arms elsewhere, here in India the process of expansion was considerably slow, for, in spite of many attempts after the conquest of Sindh in 712 A.D., it was only at the end of the 12th century A.D. that the foundation of Muslim empire in India could be laid.<sup>3</sup> First the Gurjara-Pratihāras and later the Chāhamānas stood as a bulwark of defence against the aggression and further advance of the Arabs. Sulaiman refers to the king of Juzr, who may be identified with Bhoja (c. 836-882 A.D.), as 'unfriendly to the Arabs'.

With the decline of the Ghaznavids, the house of Ghor rose to power and Muhammad Ghori succeeded in achieving victory over Pṛthvīrāja Chāhamāna and Jayachandra Ghaḍavāla in 1192 and 1193 A.D. respectively. His general Bakhtiyar Khalji reached as far as the banks of the Brahmaputra. With these developments Islam obtained a firm political hold in India.<sup>4</sup>

The influence of Islam on India in this period was more destructive than constructive. The Islamic raids drained India of much wealth.<sup>5</sup> Many scholars such as Havell, M. Habib and

<sup>1</sup>Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 456, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>CA, p. 459.

<sup>3</sup>Sharma, R.S., *JIH*, April, 1959, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup>For a study of the place of Muslims in early medieval Indian society vide Lal, K.S., *Early Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1984.

<sup>5</sup>Vide Gopal, L., *The Economic Life in Northern India c. A.D. 700—A.D. 1200*, Delhi, 1965, pp. 257-60.

M.N. Ray consider Islam as the harbinger of social revolution.<sup>1</sup> It has also been maintained by some scholars such as Tarachand that the increasing emphasis on monotheism, the rise of the emotional way of worship, the doctrine of *prapatti* (self-surrender), the adoration of guru, a degree of laxity in the caste system, the de-emphasising of the externals in religion etc. in Indian social and religious thought from the ninth century onwards were the result of Islamic influence.<sup>2</sup> However, without rejecting the possibility of some mutual influence of Islam and Hinduism in this period, it must be emphasised that these features had become integral parts of the socio-religious life of India even before the advent of Islam. We have discussed almost all these points at appropriate places in this work or in its first volume. Monotheism, nay monism, is as old in India as the Vedic age. The importance attached to guru had become a cardinal principle of esoteric Buddhism and Śākta-Tāntrika sects. The doctrine of *bhakti* was intimately connected with the indigenous theistic religious thought and is older than the *Gītā*. The inefficacy of mere externals of religion was emphatically declared by the early Siddhas. The restricted admitting of Śūdras in temples was conceded by many South Indian devotional saints and the ideal of social equality was advocated by Basava, the Liṅgāyata leader and also by the early Siddhas.<sup>3</sup>

However, it can hardly be denied that the growing hold and expansion of the Muslims gave rise to new social problems and developments. The prejudices and ruthless activities of the Muslim invaders created a feeling of terror and aversion in the minds of the Hindus. The awareness of the danger to *varṇāśramadharma* and the traditionally cherished religious ideals was heightened. As early as

<sup>1</sup>Cf. M. Habib, 'Presidential Address', *PIHC*, Bombay, 1847; Roy, M.N., *The Historical Role of Islam*, Bombay, 1938, Ch. VII; Havell, *Aryan Rule in India*; cf. also for this problem R.C. Dutta, *A History of Civilization in Ancient India*, III, p. 476 ff.; Panikkar, K.M., *A Survey of Indian History*, p. 129; Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 67-74.

<sup>2</sup>Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 2nd ed., p. 112.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Yadava, B.N.S., *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad, 1973, p. 58 f.; Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, Agra, 1965, p. 265 ff.

the ninth century Medhātithi viewed the political domination of the Mlechchhas so subversive to the social system based on *chāturvarṇya* and to the Vedic rites as to turn even Āryāvarta into a Mlechchhadeśa. In one of his inscriptions Vighraharāja IV Chāhamāna claims that he made Āryāvarta once more what its name signified by 'repeatedly exterminating the Mlechchhas'. The capture and conversion of people by the Muslim invaders also raised the problem of the purification and re-admission of the defiled persons to the fold of Hindu society. The *Devala Smṛti* lays down various *prāyaśchittas* for the purification of such men and women as were defiled by the Mlechchhas. Alberuni refers to the orthodox view that a man who was taken away as a slave by the Muslims could not be accepted in the Hindu society after his return. But the Hindu feeling of hostility to Islam to some extent was reduced by the activities of the Sūfī saints who represented another type of Muslims. By laying stress on human values they started a process of rapprochement. Khwājā Muinuddīn Chishtī of Seistan (b. 1133 A.D.) made Ajmer the centre of his activities. As service to humanity was regarded by him as the highest form of devotion to God, he won great popularity. Of his two wives one is said to have been a Hindu. The Sūfī saints carried on their activities in Gujarat and other regions of North India, and in South India also. They thus became the bridge between the two societies.

# Bibliography

1. In this Bibliography most books, enlisted in the Bibliography of Volume One of this work but used in this Volume also, are not given.
2. Books on numismatic and epigraphic sources and the accounts of the foreign travellers (not listed in the Bibliography of Volume One) are given in the list of Original Sources.

## *Original Sources*

*Agnipurāṇa*, ASS, No. 41.

Albirūnī, see *Kitābul-Hind*.

Allan, J., *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India in the British Museum*, London, 1936.

*Āpastamba Gṛhyasūtra*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.

*Arthaśāstra of Kauṣilya*, ed. by R.P. Kangle.

*Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra*, ASS, 1913.

*Avesta*, ed. by J. Darmesteter, SBE, Vols. IV and XXIII.

*Bālakrīḍā* of Viśvarūpa, TSS, 1922-24.

*Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra*, ed. by Caland, Bibliotheca Indica, 1907.

*Bhagavadgītā*, eds. of Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, eds. of Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

*Bhavishya Purāṇa*, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1910.

*Bible*.

*Bṛhaspati Smṛti*.

*Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira, trans. by H. Kern.

*Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa*, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1913.

*Brahma Purāṇa*, ASS, Poona, 1895.

*Brahma Sūtras* or *Vedānta Sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa.

*Brahmasiddhi* of Maṇḍanamiśra, Madras, 1937.

*Chach-nāmā*, Karachi, 1900.



- Dharmaśāstra Saṁgraha*, ed. by J. Vidyasagara, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1876.
- Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III.
- Garuḍa Purāṇa*, ed. by M.N. Datta, Calcutta, 1908.
- Gautama Dharmasūtra*, ed. by Bühler, Bombay, 1892.
- Gnoli, *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters*, Rome.
- Gobhila Grhyasūtra*, Calcutta, 1936.
- Goyal, S.R., *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*, Jaipur, 1982.
- , *Guptakālīna Abhilekha*, Meerut, 1984.
- Harivaṁśa*, ed. of Gita Press, Gorakhpur.
- Harshacharita* of Bāṇa, ed. by P.V. Kane, Delhi, 1965.
- Jñānasiddhi* of Indrabhūti, ed. by B. Bhattacharya, GOS, 44, Baroda, 1929.
- Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva, trans. by C.T. Tawney, London.
- Kirāb-ul-Hind* of al-Birūnī, Eng. trans. (*Alberūnī's India*) by E.C. Sachau, London, 1914.
- Liṅga Purāṇa*, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1924.
- Mahābhārata*, Critical text, Poona; ed. of Gita Press, Gorakhpur.
- Majumdar, R.C., *Classical Accounts of India*.
- Manubhāshya* of Medhātithi.
- Manu-Smṛti*, trans. by Bühler, Vol. XXV of SBE, Oxford, 1886.
- Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Varanasi, 1961.
- Matsya Purāṇa*, ASS, Poona, 1907.
- Matsya Purāṇa*, Venkatesvra Press, Bombay, 1923.
- Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* of Jaiminī.
- Nārada Purāṇa*, ed. of Gita Press, Gorakhpur.
- Nārada Smṛti*.
- Nyāya Sūtras* of Gautama.
- Padma Purāṇa*, Gurumandal Press, Calcutta, 1957.
- Parāśara-mādhaviya*, *Parāśara-Smṛti* with the comm. of Sāyaṇa.
- Pāraskara Grhyasūtra*, Benares, 1938.
- Qurān*.
- Śaṅkaravijaya* of Anandagiri, Calcutta, 1968.
- Śaktisaṅgama Tantra*, ed. by B. Bhattacharyya, GOS, 61, 91, 104, Baroda, 1932, 1941, 1947.
- Śāṅkhāyana Grhyasūtra*, Delhi, 1960.
- Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra*, Bibliotheca Indica, 1988-99,

*Sāṅkhya Sūtras* of Kapila.

*Sarvadarśana Saṁgraha* of Mādhava, trans. by V.S. Sharma, Varanasi, 1964.

Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 2nd ed.

*Śiva Purāṇa*, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay.

Smith, V.A., *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, including the Cabinet of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. I, Oxford, 1906.

*Smṛitichandrikā* of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa, ed. by L. Srinivasacharya, 6 vols., Mysore, 1914-21.

*Smṛitināmsamuchchaya*, ASS, Poona, 1905.

*Smṛityārthasāra* of Śrīdhara, ASS, Poona, 1912.

*Śrībhāṣya* of Rāmānuja, Poona, 1959-62.

*Vaikhānasa Śrautasūtra*, Bibliotheca Indica, 1924.

*Vaiśeshika Sūtras* of Kaṇāda.

*Vaiṣṇava Dharmasāstra* or *Vishṇu Smṛti*.

*Varāha Purāṇa*, Benares, 1936.

*Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra*, ed. G. Bühler, Bombay, 1892.

*Vāyu Purāṇa*, Poona, 1905.

*Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1912.

*Vishṇu Purāṇa*, Eng. trans. by H.H. Wilson; ed. of Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

Whitehead, R.B., *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum, Lahore*, I.

—, *Indo-Greek Coins*, Oxford, 1914.

*Yājñavalkyasmṛti*.

*Yogasūtras* of Patañjali.

*Yuga Purāṇa*, ed. and trans. by K.P. Jayaswal, *JBORS*, XIV, pp. 397-

421; ed. and trans. by K.H. Dhruva, *JBORS*, XVI, pp. 18-66.

### *Modern Works*

Agrawala, V.S., *Bhārata Sāvitrī*.

—, *Devī Māhātmya*.

—, *Indian Art*.

—, *Chakradhvaja*.

—, *Vāmana Purāṇa—A Study*.

—, *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa—eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyana*.

Aiyangar, S. Krishnaswamy, *Contribution of South India to Indian Culture*, Calcutta, 1923.

- Altekar, A.S., *Rāshṭrakūṭas and their Times*, Poona, 1934.
- Arnold and Guillaume (eds.), *Legacy of Islam*, Oxford, 1931.
- Arora, R. K., *Historical and Cultural Data from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, Delhi, 1972.
- Ayyar, C.V. Narayan, *Origin and Early History of Śaivism*, Madras, 1936.
- Bagchi, P.C., *Studies in the Tantras*, Calcutta, 1939.
- Banerjea, J.N., *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion*, Calcutta.
- Banerji, A.C., *Studies in the Brāhmaṇas*, Delhi, 1963.
- Banerji, G.N., *Hellenism in Ancient India*, London, 1920.
- Barnett, L.D., *Hindu Gods and Heroes*, London, 1922.
- Belvalkar, S.K., and Ranade, R.D., *History of Indian Philosophy*, Poona, 1927.
- Bendall, C., *Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1883.
- Bhagwan Das, *Kṛishṇa : A Study in the Theory of Avatāras*, Bombay, 1962.
- Bhandarkar, D.R., *Lectures on the Ancient History of India (Carmichael Lectures)*, Calcutta, 1919.
- Bhardwaj, S.M., *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, Los Angeles, 1973.
- Bhattacharya, N.N., *History of Indian Cosmogonical Ideas*.
- Bhattacharya, Vidhushekhar, *The Āgamaśāstra of Gauḍapāda*, Calcutta, 1943.
- Bhatt, S.R., *The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra—an Advaitic Approach*.
- Bloomfield, M., *The Religion of the Vedas*, New York, 1908.
- Bose, P.N., *Indian Teachers of the Buddhist Universities*, 1923.
- Bouquet, A.C., *Hinduism*.
- , *Comparative Religion*.
- Briggs, George Weston, *Gorakhanātha and Kanphaṭā Yogīs*, Calcutta, 1938.
- Bultmann, Rudolf, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, New York, 1956.
- Burns, E.M., *Western Civilizations*, New York, 1949.
- Callewaert, W.N., and Shilananda, Hemraj, *Bhagavadgītā : A Study in Transcultural Translation*, Ranchi, 1983.
- Chai Shin, Yu, *Early Buddhism and Christianity*, Delhi, 1981.
- Chakladar, H.C., *Social Life in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1929.

- Chakravarty, C., *Tantras: Studies in their Religion and Literature*, Calcutta, 1963.
- Chanda, R.P., *The Indo-Aryan Races*, Dacca, 1916.
- Chatterji, S., *The Evolution of the Theistic Sects in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1962.
- Chitrav, S. S., *Madhyayugīna Charitrakośa*, Poona, 1937.
- , *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Charitakośa*, Poona.
- Coomaraswamy, A.K., *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*, London, 1913.
- Cox, Sir G., *The Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, Kegan Paul, 1878.
- Crooke, W., *Popular Religions and Folklore of Northern India*, Oxford, 1926.
- Das Gupta, S. B., *Introduction to Tāntric Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1950.
- , *Śrī Rādhā kā Kramavikāsa*.
- Dayakrishna, *Social Philosophy : Past and Future*.
- de Burgh, W.G., *The Legacy of the Ancient World*, 2 vols. Pelican Books, 1953.
- Devahuti, D., (ed.), *Bias in Indian Historiography*, New Delhi.
- Dikshitar, V.R.R., *The Purāṇa Index*, 2 vols., Madras, 1951, 1952.
- Dinkar, R.S., *Saṃskṛti ke Chāra Adhyāya*, Patna, 1962.
- Elliot, H.M., and Dawson, John, *History of India as told by its Own Historians*, 8 vols., London, 1866-77.
- Elwin, V., *Myths of Middle India*, Oxford, 1946.
- Farquhar, J.N., *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, Oxford, 1920.
- , *Apostle Thomas in South India*.
- Frazer, J.G., *The Golden Bough*, London.
- Gajendragadkar, K.V., *Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy*, Bombay, 1959.
- Garbe, R., *Philosophy of Ancient India*, Chicago, 1897.
- Getty, A., *Gaṇeśa*.
- Ghate, V.S., *The Vedānta*, Poona, 1926.
- Ghoshal, U.N., *Studies in Indian History and Culture*.
- Gonda, J., *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, Utrecht, 1954.
- , *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, The Hague, 1965.
- Gopal, L., *The Economic Life in Northern India*, Delhi, 1965.
- Goyal, S.R., *Viśva kā Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, Gorakhpur, 1962.
- , *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, Allahabad, 1967.



- , *Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aura Sāṃskṛtika Itihāsa*, Varanasi, 1973.
- , *A Religious History of Ancient India*, Vol. I, Meerut, 1984.
- Guillaume, Alfred, *Islam*, 1956.
- Gupta, S.K., *Elephant in Indian Art and Mythology*, New Delhi, 1983.
- Hamidullah, Muhammad, *Introduction to Islam*, 1980.
- Havell, E.B., *Indian Sculptures and Paintings*.
- Haykal, M.H., *The Life of Muhammad*, Delhi, 1976.
- Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, Calcutta, 1958.
- , *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, Dacca, 1940.
- Herman von-Glasenapp, *Buddhism—a non-Theistic Religion*, London, 1970.
- Hiriyanna, M., *Indian Philosophical Studies*, Mysore, 1957.
- , *Outline of Indian Philosophy*.
- Hodivala, S.H., *Studies in Pārsī History*, Bombay, 1920.
- Hooper, J.S.M., *Hymns of the Ālvārs*, Calcutta, 1929.
- Hopkins, E.W., *The Great Epic of India*, Yale University Press, 1920.
- , *Origin and Evolution of Religion*.
- , *Epic Mythology*, 1905.
- , *Ethics of India*, London, 1925.
- Jairazbhoy, R.A., *Foreign Influence in Ancient India*, Asia Publishing House, 1963.
- Jaiswal, Suvira, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*.
- Kapoor, S.N., *Śrī Laṅkā men Hindu Dharma*, Meerut, 1984.
- Katre, S.L., *Avatāras of the Gods*, Allahabad University Studies, 1940.
- Keith, A.B., *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford, 1928.
- , *Sanskrit Drama*, Oxford, 1924.
- Khurshid Ahmad, *Islam : Basic Principles and Characteristics*, Aligarh, 1981.
- Kumar, Pushpendra, *Śakti Cult in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1974.
- Lal, K.S., *History of Khaljis*, Allahabad, 1950.
- , *Early Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1984.
- Lorenzen, David N., *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*, Berkeley, 1972.
- Macdonald, A., *The Vedic Mythology*.

- Macdonell, A.A., *History of Sanskrit Literature*, London, 1900.
- Mackenzie, J., *Hindu Ethics*, London, 1922.
- Mahadevan, G., *A Study in Early Advaita*, Madras, 1954.
- Maine, H.S., *Village Communities in East and West*, 1980.
- Maitreya, A.K., *Gauḍalekhamālā*, Rajshahi, 1319 B.S.
- Majumdar, B.B., *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, Calcutta, 1965.
- Majumdar, R.C., (ed.), *History of Bengal*, I, 1943.
- Maudidi, Syed Abul Ala, *Finality of Prophethood*, Delhi, 1979.
- Mehta, P.D., *Early Indian Religious Thought*, London, 1956.
- Mirgana, A., *Early Spread of Christianity*.
- Mishra, Kamalakar, *Significance of Tāntric Tradition*, Varanasi.
- Monier-Williams, W., *Religious Thought and Life in India*, London, 1891.
- , *Hinduism*.
- Mookerji, Radhakumud, *Hindu Civilization*, London, 1936.
- Morgan, K.W., *The Religion of the Hindus*, New York, 1953.
- Muhammad Ali, Maulana, *The Religion of Islam*, New Delhi.
- Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, 1955.
- Muslehuddin, Muhammad, *Morality : its Concept and Role in Islamic Order*, Delhi, 1982.
- Nandinath, S.C., *A Handbook of Vīraśaivism*, Dharwar, 1942.
- Nikhilananda, Swami, *Hinduism*.
- Nizami, K.A., *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*.
- Oldham, C.G., *The Sun and the Serpent*, 1905.
- O'Malley, L.S.S., *Popular Hinduism*, Cambridge, 1965.
- Osborne, Arthur, *Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism*, London, 1959.
- Palmer, R.B., *Dionysus : Myth and Cult*, Indian University Press, 1905.
- Pande, L.P., *Sun Worship in Ancient India*, 1972.
- Pande, Susmita, *Birth of Bhakti in Indian Religions and Art*.
- Pandey, Sangam Lal, *Mūla Śāṅkara Vedānta*, Allahabad, 1979.
- Panikkar, K.M., *A Survey of Indian History*.
- Pargiter, F.E., *The Purāṇa Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, Oxford University Press, 1913.
- Parrinder, Geoffrey, *Avatāra and Incarnation*, New York, 1982.
- Pathak, V.S., *History of Śaiva Cults in Northern India*, Benares.

- , *Ancient Historians of India*, Bombay, 1966.
- Pillai, Nallasvami, *Studies in Śaiva Siddhānta*, Madras, 1911.
- Plott, John C., *A Philosophy of Devotion*, Delhi, 1974.
- Poddar Abhinandana Grantha*.
- Pratt, J.B., *Why Religions Die ?*
- Professor Surya Kumar Bhuyan Commemoration Volume*, Gauhati, 1966.
- Pusalkar, A.D., *Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas*, Bombay, 1966.
- Radhakrishnan, S., *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, London, 1969.
- , *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vols. London, 1923, 1927.
- Rai, J.M., *The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1974.
- Rao, T.A.G., *History of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas*, Madras, 1923.
- , *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, 2 vols., Madras, 1914-1916.
- Raychaudhuri, H.C., *Materials for the Study of the Early History of Vaiṣṇava Sect*, Calcutta, 1936.
- Robertson, A., *Jesus : Myth or History*, London, 1946.
- Roy, M.N., *The Historical Role of Islam*, Bombay, 1938.
- Sachau, *Al-Birūnī's India*.
- Sakhare, M.R., *History and Philosophy of Liṅgāyat Religion*, Belgaum, 1942.
- Saletore, B.A., *Mediaeval Jainism*, Bombay, 1938.
- Sastri, K.A.N., *History of South India*, London, 1958.
- Schrader, F.O., *Introduction to the Pāñcharātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā*, Adyar, 1916.
- Seal, B.N., *Comparative Studies in Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity*.
- Sharma, Munshi Ram, *Bhakti kā Vikāsa*, Varanasi, 1958.
- Sharma, R.S., *Indian Feudalism*, Calcutta, 1965.
- , *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983.
- Sharma, S.R., *Jainism and Karnataka Culture*, Dharwar, 1940.
- Shastri, A.M., *India as Seen in the Bṛhat-saṁhitā of Varāhamihira*.
- Siddiqi, M.M., *What is Islam ?*, Delhi, 1983.
- Sidhantashastree, R.K., *Śaivism Through the Ages*.
- Singh, B.P., *Rāmabhakti men Rasika Sampradāya*.
- Singh, O.P., *Religion and Iconography of Early Indian Coins*, Varanasi, 1978.
- Singh, Ranjit, *Dharma kī Hindu Avadhāraṇā*, Allahabad, 1977.



- Sinha, Jadunath, *Schools of Śaivism*, Calcutta, 1970.  
 Sinha, S.C., *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, 1983.  
 Sircar, D.C., (ed.), *Religious Life in Ancient India*.  
 —, *The Bhakti Cult and Ancient Indian Geography*, Calcutta, 1970.  
 —, *Śakti Cult and Tārā*, Calcutta, 1967.  
 —, *Social Life in Ancient India*, Calcutta.  
 Sircar, D.C., *Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1971.  
 Sivananda, Swami, *World Religions*, Rishikesh, 1947.  
 Slater, G., *The Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture*, London, 1924.  
 Smith, G.E., *The Birth of the Gods*, Longmans, 1919.  
 Smith, V.A., *Early History of India*, Oxford, 1924.  
 Subrahmanyam, Ka Naa, *The Catholic Community in India*, Madras, 1970.  
 Sukthankar, V.S., *Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata*.  
 Suzuki, D.T., *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, London, 1979.  
 Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*.  
 Taraporewala, I. J.S., *The Exact Date of the Arrival of the Pārsīs in India*.  
 Thakur, S.C., *Christian and Hindu Ethics*, London, 1969.  
 Tilak, B.G., *Gītā Rahasya*.  
 Upadhyaya, B., *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya*, Allahabad, 2020 V.E.  
 Vaidya, C.V., *Epic India*, Bombay, 1907.  
 Vaidya, P.L., *The Mahābhārata : It's History and Character*.  
 Vyas, R.N., *The Bhāgavata Bhakti Cult*.  
 Wilson, H.H., *Essays and Lectures Chiefly on the Religion of the Hindus*.  
 Woodroff, Sir J., *Shakti and Shākta*, London, 1920.  
 Yaduvansi, *Śaiva Mata*, Patna, 1955.  
 Yazdani, G., (ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan*, 2 vols., London, 1960.  
 Zimmer, H., *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, New York, 1952.

#### *Journals*

- Acta Orientalia*, Budapest.  
*Advent*, Pondicherry.



- American Philosophical Quarterly*, Pennsylvania.  
*Anekānta*, Delhi.  
*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona.  
*Annals of Oriental Research*, Madras.  
*Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*.  
*Aryan Path*, Bombay.  
*Bengal Past and Present*, Calcutta.  
*Bhāratavarsha*, Calcutta.  
*Bhāratī*, Bombay.  
*Bhāratī*, Varanasi.  
*Bhāratīya Vidyā*, Bombay.  
*Bhavan's Journal*, Bombay.  
*Brahmavidyā*, Adyar.  
*Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Poona.  
*Bulletin of Rama Krishna Mission Institute of Calcutta*, Calcutta.  
*Bulletin of the Institutes of Post-Graduate (Evening) Studies*, Delhi.  
*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London.  
*Calcutta Review*, Calcutta.  
*Central Asiatic Journal*, The Hague.  
*Cultural Forum*, New Delhi.  
*Epigraphia Indica*, Delhi.  
*Folk Lore*, Calcutta.  
*Hibbert Journal*, London.  
*History of Religion*, Chicago.  
*Indian Antiquary*, Bombay.  
*Indian Culture*.  
*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta.  
*Indian Journal of Parapsychology*, Jaipur.  
*Indian Philosophy of Culture*, Vrindaban.  
*Indian Studies : Past and Present*, Calcutta.  
*Indica*, Bombay.  
*Indo-Asian Culture*, New Delhi.  
*Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad.  
*Islamic Review*, London.  
*Jijñāsā*, Jaipur.  
*Journal of American Oriental Society*, New Haven.  
*Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, Rajamundry.  
*Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Calcutta.  
*Journal of Asian Studies*, Michigan, U. S. A.

- Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta.  
*Journal of Asiatic Society of Bombay*, Bombay.  
*Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Gauhati.  
*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Patna.  
*Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Patna.  
*Journal of the Bombay Historical Society*, Bombay.  
*Journal of the Department of Letters*, Calcutta University.  
*Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, Allahabad.  
*Journal of Ganga Nath Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha*.  
*Journal of Historical Research*, Ranchi.  
*Journal of Indian History*, Trivandrum.  
*Journal of Oriental Institute*, Baroda.  
*Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Varanasi.  
*Journal of the Pali Text Society*.  
*Journal of Religion*, Chicago.  
*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay Branch*, Bombay.  
*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta.  
*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*.  
*Journal of the University of Bombay*, Bombay.  
*Journal of the U.P. Historical Society*, Lucknow.  
*Journal of Yoga Institute*, Bombay.  
*Kurukshetra University Research Journal*, Kurukshetra.  
*Mahābodhi*, Calcutta.  
*Marg*, Bombay.  
*Maru Bhāratī*, Pilani.  
*Memoires of the Archaeological Survey of India*.  
*Modern Review*, Calcutta.  
*Mother India*, Pondichery.  
*Mysore Orientalist*, Mysore.  
*Nāgarī Prachārīnī Patrikā*, Varanasi.  
*Nagpur University Journal*, Nagpur.  
*New Indian Antiquary*.  
*Past and Present*, Oxford.  
*Philosophy : East and West*, Hawaii.  
*Poona Orientalist*, Poona.  
*Prabuddha Bhārata*, Calcutta.  
*Prajñā*, Varanasi.  
*Proceedings and Transactions of the All India Oriental Conference*.  
*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*.

- Purākalpa*, Varanasi.  
*Purāṇa*, Varanasi.  
*Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society*, Bangalore.  
*Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Calcutta.  
*Quest*, Bombay.  
*Sammelana Patrikā*, Allahabad.  
*Saptasindhu*, Patiala.  
*Sarasvatī*, Allahabad.  
*Śodha Patrikā*, Udaipur.  
*Tripathagā*, Lucknow.  
*University of Allahabad Studies*, Allahabad.  
*Vedānta and the West*, Hollywood.  
*Vedānta Kesarī*, Madras.  
*Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, Hoshiarpur.  
*Viśvabhāratī Annals*, Calcutta.  
*Viśvabhāratī Quarterly*, Calcutta.

# Index

(It is primarily a Name-Index mainly of the names of deities, sages, royal personages, ancient and modern authors etc. Some minor subject-heads are also included in it. All the major subject-heads are included in the detailed list of Contents).

- Abd-al-Muttālib, 435  
Abdullā, 435  
Abhinavagupta, 18, 277, 278  
Abraham, 438  
Abraham, C.M., 416  
Abū Bakr, 439, 442  
Abū Isakal-Istakhri, 339  
Abū Sa'id, 445  
Abū Tālib, 435  
Abū Yazīd, 445  
Achyuta, 107, 178, 212  
Achyutapreksha, 66  
Adhisīmakṛshṇa, 185  
Adhokshaja, 212  
Ādi Buddha, 82, 84  
Ādi Siddhas, 414  
Aditi, 220, 285, 286, 292  
Āditya, 73, 77, 201, 220, 291,  
327, 328, 331, 333, 334  
Ādityavardhana, 332  
Ādivarāha, 219  
Ādyāśakti, 409  
Agastya, 331  
Aghora, 254, 255  
Agnāyī, 289  
Agni, 3, 38, 73, 76, 78, 94, 98,  
122, 129, 202, 248, 287, 288,  
289, 300, 349, 371, 375, 383,  
387, 388  
Agni Jātaveda, 229  
Agrawala, V.S., 22, 97, 288,  
295, 296, 299, 358, 382, 409  
Ahmad, Khurshid, 446  
Ahura Mazda, 432  
Airānī, 228  
Airāvata, 227  
Aiyai, 324  
Aiyar, B.L., Parmeswar, 22  
Aiyar, Krishnaswami, 59  
Aiyar, M.K. Venkataram, 95  
Ajāmila, 106  
Ajita Keśakamblin, 68  
Akrūra, 97, 231  
Akshamālā, 45  
Akshapāda, 51  
Alakamandā, 320  
Alakshmi, 228, 287, 292, 327  
Alambā, 305  
Ālavandār, 65  
Alberūni, 139, 449  
al-Bukhārī, 442  
Alexander, 181, 249  
al-Ghazali, 444  
Ali, 79, 443  
Al Indrisi, 339  
al-Kā'bah, 434  
Allāh, 438, 567  
Allan, J., 121  
Al Ilāh, 438  
Altekar, A.S., 184  
Ālvārs, 65, 110, 111, 155  
Amareśvaraliṅga, 251  
Amarī, 324  
Amaroli, 46  
Aṃbā, 324  
Ambikā, 78, 240, 285, 289,  
292, 299, 349  
Amesha Spentas, 211, 212  
Amoghākshī, 307  
Amos, 418



- Amṛtahaṛaṇa, 122, 385  
 Amśa, 328  
 Aṇḍitā, 228  
 Anahita, 228  
 Ānanda, 317  
 Ānandagiri, 57, 59, 266, 267, 268, 333, 334, 410  
 Ānandatīrtha, 66  
 Ānandavardhana, 322  
 Ananta, 78, 217, 223  
 Anantagotra, 268  
 Anantanāga, 122  
 Anantānandagiri, 353  
 Anantavarman, 233, 372  
 Anaximander, 424  
 Āṇḍal, 112  
 Andhaka, 246, 310  
 Andhakabadha, 244  
 Andrews, C.F., 21  
 Aṅganā, 308  
 Aṅgirā, 33  
 Āṅgīrasa, 30, 177  
 Anila, 383  
 Aniruddha, 43, 48, 78, 85, 100  
 Antaryāmin, 219  
 Āpaddharmas, 7  
 Apalā, 228  
 Āpapati, 383  
 Aparārka, 6, 395  
 Aparṇā, 292  
 Apsmārapurusha, 252  
 Apollonius, 339  
 Appār, 113  
 Apsarās, 3, 124, 380, 381  
 Apte, V.M., 196  
 Āpyā, 287  
 Āraṇyānī, 287  
 Ardhanārīśvara, 81, 247, 372  
 Arishtanemi, 179, 196  
 Arjuna, Pāṇḍava, 83, 85, 95, 96, 97, 100, 102, 131, 182, 187, 188, 191, 192, 204, 209, 214, 231, 245, 246, 293, 297, 331, 357  
 Ārjunaka, 96  
 Arjuna Kārttavīrya, 20  
 Arka, 383  
 Arnold, 443  
 Arogā, 308  
 Arora, R.K., 336, 337  
 Artemis, 228  
 Aruṇa, 298  
 Arundhatī, 308, 361  
 Āryā, 293  
 Aryaman, 327, 328  
 Āryambā, 60  
 Asahāya, 48  
 Aśani, 241  
 Āśāpurīdevī, 324  
 Ashṭabhujā, 324  
 Ashṭāśṭaka Goddesses, 410  
 Asitana, 268  
 Āśmarathya, 28, 57  
 Aśoka, 97, 152, 250  
 Astaroth, 318  
 Astarte, 282, 318  
 Aster, 318  
 Asunīti, 287  
 Āsurī, 53  
 Aśvaghosha, 177, 196  
 Aśvagrāntā, 395  
 Aśvapāda, 269  
 Aśvins, 73, 85, 224, 286, 288, 327, 342  
 Atargatis, 318  
 Atreya, 57  
 Atri, 187, 237, 324  
 Auḍulomi, 28, 51  
 Aurobindo, 58, 64, 83, 194  
 Avalokiteśvara, 316, 372  
 Avantivarman, 277  
 Avatāravāda, 79-87, 385  
 Avimukteśvara, 251  
 Āyudhapurushas, 385  
 Ayyar, C.V. Narayana, 245, 246  
 Azilises, 322  
 Bagalā, 305  
 Bagchi, P.C., 259, 317, 350, 389, 390, 394, 395, 396, 409  
 Bāhuleya, 361  
 Bajpai, K.D., 232  
 Bakhtiyar Khalji, 447  
 Balabhadra, 81

- Baladeva, 3, 97, 196, 231, 294  
 Bāla-Gaṇapati, 294, 356  
 Balarāma, 85, 232, 235; see  
     Saṅkarshaṇa  
 Bāli, 85  
 Ballālasena, 48  
 Bāṇa, 253, 262, 265, 266  
 Banerjea, J.N., 3, 89, 96, 97,  
     98, 105, 120, 123, 124, 126,  
     131, 240, 249, 250, 251, 255,  
     258, 289, 290, 309, 328, 338,  
     345, 346, 353, 356, 364, 366,  
     376, 387, 407, 409  
 Bannerjee, P., 96, 248  
 Barth, 97  
 Basava, 272, 275, 448  
 Basham, A.L., 102  
 Basu, A., 277  
 Basu, N.N., 338  
 Baudhāyana, 237  
 Behra, K.C., 323  
 Belvalkar, S.K., 7, 17, 22, 24,  
     25, 26, 27, 28, 59, 60, 62  
 Bentham, 70  
 Bhadrakālī, 246, 291, 299, 319  
 Bhadrāryyā, 369  
 Bhadrāsundarī, 307  
 Bhadreśvarī, 307  
 Bhaga, 120, 288, 327, 328  
 Bhagavatī, 228, 373, 388  
 Bhagawan Das, 81, 84  
 Bhāgīratha, 246  
 Bhairava, 370, 396  
 Bhairavāchārya, 266  
 Bhairavī, 305  
 Bhandari, V.S., 240  
 Bhandarkar, D.R., 260, 296,  
     330, 333, 334  
 Bhandarkar, R.G., 3, 26, 31,  
     96, 234, 243, 244, 252, 257,  
     258, 259, 260, 261, 265, 274,  
     276, 277, 278, 283, 290, 346,  
     348, 350, 354, 355, 358, 360,  
     395, 401  
 Bhānu, 388  
 Bharadvāja, 330  
 Bharata, 83, 85  
 Bhārati, 61, 88, 89, 286  
 Bharati, Agehananda, 21  
 Bhartṛhari, 58  
 Bhartṛprapañcha, 59  
 Bhāravī, 321  
 Bhāruchi, 48  
 Bhāskara, 365  
 Bhāskara Laugākshī, 52  
 Bhāskaralinga, 255  
 Bhattacharya, A.K., 303  
 Bhattacharya, B., 315, 317, 404,  
     406, 413  
 Bhattacharya, D.C., 49, 317  
 Bhattacharya, H.D., 54, 56,  
     392, 397, 402, 413  
 Bhattacharya, N.N., 71, 281,  
     282, 283, 284, 285, 304, 314,  
     318, 319, 389, 391, 394, 395,  
     403  
 Bhattacharya, Suddhibhushan,  
     91  
 Bhattacharji, S., 117, 228, 245,  
     303, 304, 313, 330, 335, 347,  
     362  
 Bhatta, G.H., 67  
 Bhattasali, N.K., 379  
 Bhava, 81, 249, 291  
 Bhavabhūti, 265, 269  
 Bhavānī, 307  
 Bhīma, 85  
 Bhīmaśaṅkara, 251  
 Bhīshma, 246, 381  
 Bhīshaṇa, 268  
 Bhojarāja, 54, 233, 379, 447  
 Bhṛgu, 227, 237, 260  
 Bhūdevī, 313  
 Bhūmi, 229  
 Bhūtam, 111  
 Bhūtamātā, 305  
 Bhūtapati, 258  
 Bhuvaneśvarī, 301, 305  
 Bīja-Gaṇapati, 356  
 Bijjala, 273  
 Biswas, D.K., 337, 364, 365,  
     372  
 Black Stone, 436  
 Blau, A., 34  
 Boar, 86, 135  
 Bodholbana Nityānanda, 268

- Bothlingk, 90  
 Bouquet, A.C., 2, 420, 434, 437  
 Brachmanoi, 337  
 Brachme, 337  
 Brahmā, 3, 4, 33, 43, 73, 74, 75, 76, 85, 90, 95, 98, 99, 100, 226, 245, 253, 254, 256, 286, 287, 292, 298, 300, 310, 331, 333, 334, 357, 373, 374, 377, 379  
 Brahmakalā, 308  
 Brahmaloaka, 376  
 Brahman, 40, 63, 75, 95, 354, 376  
 Brahmanaspati, 358  
 Brahmadeva, 360, 368  
 Brahmāṇi, 310  
 Brahma Nirvāṇa, 30  
 Brahmanyadeva, 370  
 Brahmasuta, 258  
 Brahmaṇḍīyā, 291  
 Brāhmī, 373  
 Br̥hadratha, 384  
 Br̥haddivā, 287  
 Br̥haspati, 48, 68, 100, 342, 349, 375  
 Briffault, R., 281, 282  
 Buddha, 27, 38, 39, 50, 61, 80, 97, 108, 109, 119, 120, 196, 342, 421, 424  
 Buddhaprakasha, 413, 448  
 Buddhayāna, 27  
 Buddhi, 355  
 Bühler, G., 47, 260  
 Bulcke, C., 20, 98, 221, 234, 235  
 Bultmann, R., 417  
 Burn, E.M., 417, 422, 423, 434  
 Burgess, 340  
 Caligula, 428  
 Callewaert, W.N., 21, 22, 24  
 Cannan, 417  
 Chaitanya, 66, 107, 314  
 Chaitraka, 231  
 Chaityavṛkshas, 123  
 Chakrapurusha, 125  
 Chakra Sudarśana, 331  
 Chakra-vikrama, 125  
 Chakravarti, A.C., 91, 96  
 Chakravarti, A.K., 288, 290  
 Chāmunda, 77, 305, 310, 319, 324  
 Chanda, R.P., 98, 128, 129, 269, 282, 296, 298, 304  
 Chaṇḍī, 228, 323  
 Chaṇḍidāsa, 315  
 Chaṇḍikā, 304  
 Chandra, 3, 232, 383, 387  
 Chandragupta I, 125  
 Chandragupta Maurya, 182, 185, 203  
 Chandragupta II, Vikramāditya, 260  
 Chandrasvāmin, 269  
 Chandrikā, 308, 310  
 Chāṅgu, 232  
 Chāṅgu-Nārāyaṇa, 232  
 Channa-Basava, 272  
 Chāpala, 262  
 Charpentier, J., 22, 122  
 Chatterjee, S.K., 118, 157, 344  
 Chatterji, A.K., 144, 152, 153, 378  
 Chatterji, B., 227  
 Chattopadhyaya, B., 120, 122, 123  
 Chattopadhyaya, D., 68, 71  
 Chattopadhyaya, K.C., 386  
 Chaturmukha, 239  
 Chaturvyūha, 210, 211  
 Chaubey, B.B., 160  
 Chaudhuri, Roma, 67  
 Chaudhary, K.P.S., 398  
 Chaudhary, M.N., 228  
 Chhāyā, 328, 336, 338  
 Chhinnamastā, 305  
 Chidvilāsayaṭi, 59  
 Chitrakūṭa, 235  
 Chitraratha, 341  
 Chitrava, S.S., 184  
 Chola, Rajendra, 326  
 Christ, 199, 200, 204, 419-431  
 Christianity, 416-31

- Chulakokā, 320  
 Claudius, 428  
 Comari, 324  
 Coomaraswamy, 203, 346, 351  
 Cooper, James, 420  
 Cosmas Indicopleustes, 430  
 Cross, 125  
 Cunningham, A., 181  
 Curtius, Quintus, 181, 182  
 Cybele, 282  
  
 Dadhīcha, 9, 405  
 Dadhimātā, 324  
 Dādū, 414  
 Dahlmann, 20, 25  
 Dahlquist, Allan, 96, 181, 197, 203, 204, 205, 206  
 Daityas, 380  
 Daivajña-āchāryas, 340  
 Dakṣiṇāchāra, 413  
 Dākinī, 78, 233, 323, 407, 409  
 Dakṣa Prajāpati, 251  
 Dakṣeśvara, 251  
 Dāmodara, 189, 201, 209  
 Dānavas, 380  
 Dandekar, R.N., 35, 37, 157, 192  
 Daṇḍin, 253  
 Danti, 387  
 Dantidurga, 112  
 Dārūkavana, 251  
 Dur-ul-harb, 440  
 Dar-ul-Islam, 440  
 Dāruvana, 253  
 Das, A.C., 130  
 Daśaratha, 217, 221, 222, 376  
 Dāśarathī Rāma, 221  
 Dasgupta, K.K., 316  
 Dasgupta, S.B., 234  
 Dasgupta, S.N., 64, 143  
 Dasgupta, S.P., 224  
 Date, V.H., 301  
 Datta, B., 73, 410  
 Dattātreyā, 217, 223  
 David, 417  
 Dayakrishna, 142  
 Deb, B.C., 337  
 Debiprasad, 71  
 de Burgh, W.G., 417  
 De Guernatis, 347  
 Deśika Subrahmanya, 366  
 De, S.K., 22, 77  
 Deussen, 26  
 Deva, 98  
 Devakī, 178, 201, 211, 233  
 Devakīputra, 30  
 Devamātā, 308  
 Devānandā, 228  
 Devaṇṇabatta, 49  
 Devaśakti, 233  
 Devasenā, 229, 361, 370  
 Devavishṇu, 332  
 Devayajana, 349  
 Devayāna, 30, 56  
 Devīpīthas, 295  
 Dhanapati, 231, 353, 381  
 Dhanvantri, 227  
 Dharma, 85, 205, 217  
 Dharma-Chakra, 124  
 Dhātā, 226, 376  
 Dhātṛ, 226, 328  
 Dhataratta, 226  
 Dhaumya, 331  
 Dhawan, S., 228  
 Dhīshaṇā, 287  
 Dhṛtarāshṭra, 128  
 Dhṛti, 292  
 Dhūmra, 305  
 Dhūmrālochana, 298  
 Dhruva, 37, 107, 117  
 Dhvajās, 126  
 Dhvani, 308  
 Dhyānī Buddhas, 210  
 Dikshit, R.K., 229  
 Dinkar, R.S., 443  
 Diodorus, 182  
 Dionysos, 181, 214  
 Diti, 291  
 Divākara, 333  
 Divine Mothers, 409  
 Divine Vāsudeva, 179, 188, 207  
 Draupadī, 99, 146, 190, 229  
 Drupada, 246  
 Durgā, 38, 44, 72, 76, 78, 120, 135, 228, 229, 285, 289, 336,



- 370, 373, 392  
 Durgama, 298-302  
 Durgī, 290, 291  
 Durvāsā, 99  
 Duryodhana, 215  
 Dushyanta, 237  
 Dutt, R.C., 412, 448  
 Dvādaśāditya, 341  
 Dvaimātura, 347  
 Dvaipāyana, 16  
 Dvīta, 100  
 Dwarf, 86, 160, 220  
 Dyaus, 78, 286
- Edgerton, 22, 25  
 Ekānamśā, 229, 294  
 Ekāntada Rāmayya, 273, 274  
 Ekārṇavaśāyin, 217  
 Ekata, 100, 194  
 Eleatic, 424  
 Elijah, 418  
 Eliot, Charles, 1  
 Eusebius, 429
- Fana, 445  
 Fātimā, 79, 441  
 Fish Incarnation, 218  
 Fleet, J.F., 13, 229, 230, 260,  
 267, 273, 340  
 Foucher, 342  
 Frazer, 58, 281
- Gaja-Lakshmī, 227, 230, 320,  
 322  
 Gajānana, 343, 348; see Gaṇeśa  
 Gajendragadkar, K.V., 41, 42,  
 44, 46  
 Gaṇapatyas, 410  
 Gaṇapati, 44, 76, 343, 360, 372;  
 see Gaṇeśa  
 Gaṇapatikumāra, 353  
 Gaṇḍa, Tripurāntaka, 261  
 Gandhabbas, 98  
 Gandhamādana, 246  
 Gandharvas, 3, 78, 87, 380  
 Gandharvī, 287  
 Gandhi, Mahatma M.K., 1, 21,  
 86
- Gaṇeśa, 38, 72, 78, 230, 240,  
 247, 302, 343-359, 373, 387,  
 410  
 Gaṅgā, 121, 246, 321, 361, 362,  
 363  
 Gangesvarananda, 386  
 Ganguli, K.M., 24  
 Garbe, Richard, 22, 25, 31, 52,  
 68, 138, 204, 424, 427  
 Garga, 259  
 Gārgya, 260  
 Garuḍa, 78, 98, 122, 195, 211,  
 232, 330, 385  
 Garuḍadhvaja, 127, 205, 208  
 Garutmān, 371, 385  
 Gaudapāda, 53, 59  
 Gaurī, 307, 310, 322, 324, 388  
 Gautama, 51, 138, 139, 143,  
 237  
 Gautamīputra, 205  
 Gautamīputra Bhāgavata, 132  
 Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi, 216,  
 235  
 Gautamīputra Vṛshadhvaja,  
 369  
 George, Stock, 79  
 Georgi, P., 197  
 Getty, A., 343, 356, 359  
 Ghani, M.A., 446, 447  
 Ghora Āṅgīrasa, 177, 178,  
 179, 330  
 Ghosha, Aurobindo, 22  
 Ghoshal, U.N., 16  
 Girichara, 240  
 Girijāsuta, 353  
 Girīśa, 240  
 Girisutā, 387  
 Giritra, 240  
 Gnoli, 267  
 Gnosticism, 424  
 Gobhila, 138  
 Goetz, Hermann, 408  
 Gokula, 188  
 Goloka, 116  
 Gomatī, 306  
 Gonda, J., 81, 150, 157, 158,  
 159, 188, 219, 221, 225, 229,  
 238

- Gondophares, 425, 426  
 Gondopheres, 425  
 Gopal, L., 443  
 Gopalan, S., 142, 146  
 Gopinātha Kavirāja, 390  
 Gopīs, 190, 314  
 Gorakha, 411  
 Gotama, 177  
 Govinda, 59, 106, 180, 189, 201, 209, 212  
 Govindananda, 57  
 Govindayati, 61  
 Goyal, S.R., 2, 6, 17, 20, 50, 120, 123, 126, 130, 132, 150, 152, 179, 186, 190, 197, 205, 208, 210, 215, 224, 230, 232, 233, 234, 235, 261, 267, 282, 284, 289, 291, 315, 319, 322, 323, 332, 385, 407, 416  
 Grahavipras, 341  
 Grierson, 90, 198  
 Guha, 361, 369  
 Guillaume, A., 434, 435, 443, 444, 445  
 Guṇḡu, 287  
 Gupta, B.L., 386  
 Gupta, S.K., 343, 345, 352, 356  
  
 Habbān, 426  
 Habib, 447, 448  
 Hajj, 440  
 Hala, 190, 230  
 Haldar, J.R., 226  
 Halāyudha, 9, 48  
 Haldhra, 223; see Saṅkarshaṇa  
 Hamidullah, M., 435  
 Hanīfs, 435  
 Hanumāna, 20, 40, 85, 98, 99, 386  
 Hanumat, 79; see Hanumāna  
 Hera, 76, 245, 300  
 Haradatta, 237, 262  
 Haradaya, 108  
 Hari, 18, 75, 99, 107, 126, 156, 212, 217, 218, 293, 300  
 Haribhadra, 260  
 Haridāsa, 54  
 Haridrā-Gaṇapati, 354, 356  
 Harihara, 411  
 Harsha, 64, 233, 264  
 Hasan, 441  
 Hastāmalaka, 61  
 Hastings, Warren, 22  
 Hastimukha, 387, 388  
 Haṭhayoga, 46, 47, 413  
 Havell, 447  
 Haykal, M.H., 435  
 Hazra, R.C., 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 29, 32, 35, 36, 39, 135, 150, 151, 240, 301, 335, 404, 405, 406, 414  
 Hegira, 436  
 Heliiodorus, 127, 132, 205, 232  
 Hemachandra, 69, 403  
 Hemādri, 49, 370  
 Heracles, 131, 180, 181, 185, 203, 204, 231, 249  
 Heraclitus, 424  
 Heramba, 347, 356  
 Herambasuta-Gaṇapati, 353, 354  
 Herman von-Glasenapp, 109  
 Herodotus, 336  
 Hicronymian Martyrology, 429  
 Hijrah, 436  
 Hill, W.D.P., 22, 26  
 Hiraṇyagarbha, 242, 374, 375, 376, 387  
 Hiraṇyakaśipu, 85, 160, 219  
 Hiraṇyāksha, 219  
 Hirianna, M., 59, 91, 94  
 Hittites, 239  
 Hitti, Philip K., 436, 437, 439, 441  
 Hoḍikā, 153  
 Hodiāla, S.K., 328  
 Holtzmann, 16, 25  
 Holy Ghost, 420  
 Hopkins, E.W., 20, 22, 25, 91, 121, 123, 158, 160, 190, 198, 199, 201, 331  
 Hri, 225  
 Hṛshikeśa, 212  
 Huvishka, 250, 368  
 Husain, 441

- ibn-Ishāq, 431  
 ibn-Hishām, 435  
 Idā, 184  
 Idamburi, 356  
 Ihsān, 440  
 Ikshvāku, 195, 221  
 Ila/Ilā, 184, 185, 186, 285  
 Image Worship, 128-132  
 Imān, 438, 543  
 Indu, 98  
 Indra, 2, 73, 77, 78, 85, 93, 94, 96, 122, 129, 130, 148, 153, 158, 160, 180, 188, 202, 205, 210, 219, 227, 229, 245, 249, 286, 288, 289, 354, 371, 375, 379, 385  
 Indradyumna, 38, 406  
 Indrānī, 77, 289, 292, 308, 309  
 Irene, 228  
 Īsāna, 77, 131, 241, 254, 383  
 Ishtar, 318  
 Isis, 282  
 Islahi, Sadruddin, 437  
 Īśvarakṛṣṇa, 53, 59  
 Itimissakesi, 228  
  
 Jackson, A.M.J., 34  
 Jacob, 416  
 Jacobi, 20, 57, 81, 179  
 Jaiminī, 51, 54, 55  
 Jaiswal, Suvira, 80, 81, 90, 102, 156, 177, 203, 208, 213, 214, 220, 225, 226, 227  
 Jamadgni, 20  
 Jāmbavatī, 211  
 Jambhala, 229  
 Janaka, 135, 147, 221  
 Janamejaya, 191  
 Janārdana, 209, 232  
 Jāṅgulī, 317  
 Jarā, 383  
 Jaṭila, 245, 249  
 Jayā, 307  
 Jayadeva, 234  
 Jayanta, 51, 131, 360  
 Jayantī, 306  
 Jayāpīḍa, 366  
 Jayarāśibhaṭṭa, 69  
 Jayaswal, K.P., 196, 201, 209  
 Jesus, 416, 419, 420, 421, 423, 438  
 Jhaṅkāra, 396  
 Jihād, 440  
 Jīmūtavāhana, 49, 321  
 Jishnugupta, 267  
 Jīvitagupta, 340  
 Jñānadeva, 22  
 Jñās, 288  
 Johansson, K.F., 157  
 John the Baptist, 420, 421  
 Jordens, J.T.F., 29  
 Joseph, 420, 421  
 Joshi, K.S., 193  
 Joshua, 419  
 Juzr, 447  
 Jyeshthā, 383  
  
 Kabandhas, 380, 382  
 Kabīr, 66, 414  
 Kadphises, 250, 338  
 Kadru, 122, 385  
 Kailādevī, 324  
 Kaiṭabha, 296, 297, 302, 374  
 Kaivasamātā, 324  
 Kaiyaṭa, 96  
 Kakkuka, 359  
 Kāla, 10, 75, 76, 308, 314  
 Kālaka, 324  
 Kālāmukhas, 267, 270  
 Kālānanas, 261  
 Kālanemighna, 217  
 Kālarātri, 305  
 Kali, 72, 78, 285, 289, 291, 292, 307, 319, 321, 326  
 Kali Age, 14  
 Kālidāsa, 186, 221, 265, 321, 363, 369  
 Kalimā, 440  
 Kalivarjyas, 7  
 Kāliya, 122, 330  
 Kalkin, 217, 218  
 Kalkin Vishṇuśāsa, 222  
 Kallaṭa, 274  
 Kallisthenes, 430  
 Kalpavṛksha, 124



- Kalyāṇī, 307  
 Kāma, 72, 76, 187  
 Kāmākhyā, 323  
 Kāmākshī, 306  
 Kamalā, 307  
 Kamaṭheśvara, 217  
 Kambalāśvatara, 68  
 Kaṁsa, 85, 199, 201, 231  
 Kāmukā, 306  
 Kaṇāda, 52, 250  
 Kane, P.V., 4, 10, 11, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 47, 91, 95, 101, 106, 116, 117, 118, 136, 138, 140, 144, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 414  
 Kanha, 180  
 Kanishka, 250, 338, 368  
 Kāntātman, 217  
 Kāntimatī, 65  
 Kanyākumārī, 290, 291  
 Kapāla-Bhairava, 267  
 Kapāleśvara-Śiva, 267  
 Kāpālika, 265  
 Kapālin, 268, 396  
 Kapālinī, 322  
 Kapil, 39, 49, 53, 200, 261, 307  
 Kapoor, S.N., 326  
 Karālī, 289  
 Karavā Chautha, 125  
 Karmarkar, A.P., 253  
 Karṇa, 85, 331  
 Karṇimātā, 324  
 Kārshṇājini, 57  
 Kārttavīrya, Arjuna, 220  
 Kārttikarāśi, 261  
 Kārttikeya, 38, 72, 76, 78, 229, 248, 321, 347, 351, 360-370, 387  
 Kāśakṛtsna, 28  
 Kaśmīrāgama School, 237, 238  
 Kaśmīra Śaivism, 276-280  
 Kaśyapa, 218, 233, 237, 291  
 Kaṭaṅkaṭa, 349  
 Katapogon, 249  
 Kātyāyana, 186, 188  
 Kātyāyanī, 89, 290, 293, 299, 305, 322  
 Kaulajñānanirṇaya, 402  
 Kaulikas, 401  
 Kaumārī, 77, 309, 310  
 Kauṇḍinya, 258, 262, 408  
 Kaurusha, 260, 262  
 Kaurushya, 259  
 Kaushītaki, 330  
 Kauśikī, 89, 292, 304, 310  
 Kaustubha, 227, 232  
 Kauṭilya, 131, 145  
 Kavalji, 267  
 Kavirāja, Gopinātha, 57, 61  
 Kāyāvarohaṇa, 259  
 Kedāreśvara, 250  
 Keith, A.B., 57, 60, 142, 158, 177, 200, 209, 241  
 Kennedy, 198, 201  
 Kern, 195  
 Keśava, 23, 97, 212, 215, 231, 381, 387, 388  
 Keśavakaśmīrin, 67  
 Keśinisūdana, 180  
 Ketu, 342  
 Khadijā, 435  
 Kharataragachchha, 412  
 Khimalmātā, 324  
 Khokrimātā, 324  
 Khoṭṭiga, 370  
 Kichakeśvarī, 322  
 Kimpurushas, 380  
 Kingdom of God, 423  
 Kinnaras, 78, 380  
 Kinsariyā, 324  
 Kirfel, 22  
 Kīrti, 292  
 Kīrtimatī, 307  
 Kīrttivarman, 67  
 Kleukar, 197  
 Kodai, 112  
 Kokāmukhasvāmin, 219  
 Koṭavī, 307  
 Kosambi, D.D., 155, 189, 286  
 Kovalan, 326  
 Krakacha, 266, 268, 269  
 Krauñchadāraṇa, 361  
 Krishanamurti, B.N., 105  
 Krishna, Y., 144  
 Kristo, 199  
 Kriyā, 292



- Kroḍātman, 217  
 Krodha, 268, 396  
 Kṛṣṇa, 10, 16, 37, 43, 78, 81, 82, 83, 85, 99, 101, 102, 106, 107, 108, 109, 112, 116, 132, 157, 170-206, 242, 245, 252, 253, 261, 291, 301, 315, 352, 357, 364  
 Kṛṣṇa Miśra, 218, 269, 333  
 Krishna, Brahmananda, 60  
 Kṛṣṇadāsa, 411  
 Kṛṣṇa, Dvaipāyana, 246  
 Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, 78, 100, 102  
 Kṛttikās, 361, 362  
 Kṛttivāsa, 293  
 Kshemarāja, 278  
 Kshemendra, 403  
 Kshīrasāgara, 200  
 Kubera, 76, 81, 123, 126, 227, 228, 229, 347, 351, 383  
 Kubuddhi, 355  
 Kuhū, 287, 292  
 Kuladevīs, 319  
 Kullūkabhaṭṭa, 48, 392  
 Kulottuṅga, 341  
 Kumāra, 321, 360  
 Kumāragupta I, 254, 339, 340, 369  
 Kumārī, 307, 324  
 Kumārila, 54, 55, 61, 114, 222, 283  
 Kumārīpūjā, 284  
 Kumar, Pushpendra, 281, 294, 301, 305  
 Kumbhāṇḍas, 380, 387  
 Kumudā, 306  
 Kuṇḍalinī, 46, 47  
 Kunhan Raja, C., 69  
 Kuntī, 283, 331  
 Kūrma, 81, 86, 218, 219, 232  
 Kurukulla, 319  
 Kuruvai Dance, 233  
 Kushmāṇḍarāja, 349  
 Kuśika, 259, 260, 261  
 Kuśodakā, 308  
 Kuṣṭo, 199  
 Lachchhī, 228  
 Lahiri, Bela, 226, 227, 323  
 Lāhūt, 445  
 Lajjā, 292  
 Lakshmaṇa, 85, 98, 222  
 Lakshmī, 72, 76, 99, 123, 221-30, 235, 287, 292, 299, 314, 315, 319, 329, 355, 392  
 Lakshmīdhara, 391  
 Lakuliśa, 259  
 Lal, B.B., 20  
 Lalitā, 306  
 Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa, 340  
 Lal, K.S., 181, 446  
 Lambodara, 347  
 Lāṅgalin, 215  
 Lāṅguliya Narasimhadeva, 340  
 Lassen, 20, 183, 198, 201  
 Layayoga, 46  
 Lévi, S., 16, 317  
 Lingat, Robert, 137, 141  
 Liṅgāyata, 272  
 Lion-man, 86  
 Lochanā, 317  
 Lokanātha, 217  
 Lokapālas, 98, 131, 205  
 Lorenzen, David N., 257, 258, 259, 262, 263, 265, 266, 267, 273  
 Lorinser, 198, 199, 202  
 Luke, 419  
 Macdonell, A.A., 17, 19, 60, 129, 177, 285, 378  
 Macdonald, A., 120  
 Mackenzie, G.T., 428  
 Macnicol, N., 92, 95, 196, 198, 202  
 Mādalāmbikā, 272  
 Madanadahana, 244  
 Mādhava, 27, 59, 67, 69, 212, 262  
 Madhu, 302, 374  
 Madhu-Kaiṭabha, 297  
 Madhura Kavi, 113  
 Madhusūdana, 212, 217, 279  
 Madhva, 58, 66, 116, 353  
 Madīnat-un-nabī, 436  
 Madirā, 131

- Mādirāja, 272  
 Maga, 334-42  
 Magi priests, 334  
 Mahābhāgā, 308  
 Mahābrahmā, 357  
 Mahadevan, T.M.P., 22  
 Mahādevī, 307  
 Mahādurgā, 388  
 Mahādyutikara-Āditya, 388  
 Mahāganapati, 353, 354, 356  
 Mahājapa, 387  
 Mahākāla, 81, 251  
 Mahākālī, 228, 319  
 Mahālakshmī, 295, 305, 307, 406  
 Mahalingam, T.V., 324  
 Mahāmoha, 333  
 Mahamahopadhyaya, Prama-  
 thanatha, 54  
 Mahāpadma Nanda, 185  
 Mahāparishads, 348  
 Mahārājas, 98, 131, 383, 387  
 Mahāśakti, 357  
 Mahāśena, 360, 368  
 Mahāśiva, 408  
 Mahāśvetā, 338  
 Mahātripurasundarī, 44, 301  
 Mahātuṇḍā, 305  
 Mahāvarāha, 219  
 Mahāvīra, 196  
 Mahāvishṇu, 353  
 Mahāvratadharas, 267  
 Mahāyogin, 248  
 Mahendrapāla, 324  
 Mahendravarman, 111, 113, 265  
 Maheśa, 300  
 Maheshwari, H., 192  
 Maheśvara, 90, 242, 310  
 Māheśvarī, 77, 308, 310  
 Mahī, 287  
 Mahīdevī, 313  
 Mahishamardinī-Durgā, 321, 322, 323, 324  
 Mahishāsura, 295, 297, 298, 302, 369  
 Mahorāgas, 380  
 Maitreya, 260  
 Majumdar, A.K., 64, 133, 234  
 Majumdar, B.B., 24, 177, 180, 189, 190, 234  
 Majumdar, R.C., 68, 181, 203, 446, 447  
 Makara, 121, 211  
 Malaviya, Madan Modan, 21  
 Mallikārjuna, 251  
 Mānasa, 335  
 Mandā, 307  
 Māṇḍavī, 308  
 Māndhātā, 217  
 Maṅgalā, 322  
 Maṅgaleśvarī, 307  
 Maṇibhaddā, 98  
 Maṇibhadra, 3, 131, 351  
 Maṇidvīpa, 301  
 Maṇikkavāśagar, 114  
 Man-loin, incarnation, 220  
 Manmatha, 308  
 Mantrayoga, 46  
 Manu, 35, 36, 38, 81, 121, 122, 138, 139, 146, 183, 184, 191, 218, 342  
 Manu Vaivasvata, 231  
 Māra, 21  
 Mārīchī, 237  
 Mārīchikā, 305  
 Mark, 419  
 Mārkaṇḍeya, 48, 209  
 Marshall, 240, 282, 368  
 Mārtaṇḍa, 328, 372  
 Marulasiddaiah, G., 273, 275  
 Maruts, 77, 247, 286  
 Mary Virgin, 420  
 Masaga, 335  
 Mātāṅga, 352  
 Mātāṅgī, 305, 352  
 Mattamayūra, 364, 368  
 Mattamayūras, 364, 408  
 Matthew, 411, 420, 429  
 Mātrgaṇas, 369  
 Mātrīśivā, 371  
 Mātrīkās, 77, 356, 410  
 Matsya, 81, 86, 217, 218, 219  
 Maues, 322  
 Max Müller, 16, 58, 60, 129, 177, 223, 286

- Māyā, 228  
 Maudidi, Syed, Abul' Ala, 414  
 Māyāmoha, 148, 222  
 Mayūra, 333, 336  
 Mayūrāksha, 407  
 Mayavana, 190  
 Mazdai, 427, 428  
 McCormack, 275  
 Medhā, 77, 297, 300  
 Medhātithi, 48, 449  
 Medlycott, Bishop, 274  
 Megasthenes, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 203, 204, 214  
 Mehendale, M.A., 16, 18, 19, 39  
 Menā, 302  
 Menander, 97  
 Menon, P.K.K., 111  
 Meru, 127, 201  
 Micah, 418  
 Mishra, V.N., 386  
 Miśra, Kṛṣṇapati, 69, 414  
 Miśra, Maṇḍana, 61, 601  
 Miśra, Vāchaspati, 64  
 Mita, 349  
 Mithra, 328  
 Mitra, 288, 327, 328, 330, 338  
 Mitra, R.L., 177, 259  
 Modi, P.M., 56  
 Mohinī, 322  
 Mokalamātā, 324  
 Monier-Williams, 2, 90  
 Moon, 125  
 Monotheism, 448  
 Moraes, 426, 429  
 Moses, 416, 417  
 Moses, Bishop of Adule, 430  
 Mother-Goddess, 83  
 Moti Chandra, 225, 228  
 Mṛda, 249  
 Mṛgāvatī, 307  
 Mrtyu, 77, 241  
 Muhammad Ghorī, 79, 447  
 Muhammad ibn Qāsim, 447  
 Muinuddin Chishti, 449  
 Mukherjee, B.N., 228  
 Mukhopadhyaya, M., 226  
 Mukunda, 153  
 Mukuteśvarī, 307  
 Mūla, 237  
 Muṇḍa, 304  
 Murthy, H.V., 50, 51, 64, 111  
 Murugan, 367  
 Mūsalin, 214  
 Muvara-Koṇeya-Santati, 274  
 Nābhānedishtha, 184  
 Nāganikā, 205, 232, 345, 383  
 Nāgas, 3, 98, 122, 124, 380  
 Nāgeśa, 251  
 Naigameśa, 367  
 Nakta, 228  
 Nakula, 85, 96  
 Nakulīśa, 259, 260  
 Nala, 251  
 Nallāl, 324  
 Nambi, Nambiandar, 113  
 Nambudripad, P.M. Bhas-  
 karan, 194  
 Nammālvār, 113  
 Namuchi, 219, 221  
 Nanda, 189, 307  
 Nandaka, 232  
 Nandagopa, 294  
 Nandan, 112, 113  
 Nanda Vachchha, 195, 196  
 Nandī, 240  
 Nandinī, 307  
 Nandi, R.N., 154  
 Nandīśvara, 120, 384  
 Nappināi, 190, 233  
 Nara, 97, 99, 104, 188, 217  
 Nārada, 48, 94, 99, 100, 102, 104, 331, 335, 340, 357  
 Narasiṃha, 216, 217, 219, 235  
 Narasiṃhavarman, 112  
 Nārasiṃhī, 309, 310  
 Nārāyaṇa, 81, 85, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 106, 107, 122, 135, 156, 160-170, 217, 315, 405  
 Nārāyaṇa-Purusha, 103  
 Nārāyaṇavātaka, 132, 208



- Nārāyaṇī, 293, 295, 299, 307, 314, 406  
 Nāsūt, 445  
 Nāthamuni, 65, 110, 115, 236  
 Navagrahas, 341, 342  
 Navanīta-Gaṇapati, 353, 354  
 Nāyanārs, 110, 113, 155  
 Needham, Joseph, 317  
 Neo-Platonism, 443  
 Nero, 428  
 Nidhi, 308  
 Nicholson, R.A., 443, 444, 445  
 Nikhilananda, Swami, 1  
 Nikshubhā, 338  
 Nīlādevī, 223  
 Nīlakaṇṭha, 245  
 Nīlakaṇṭha, Bhaṭṭa, 60  
 Nīlasarasvatī, 317  
 Nīlī, 324  
 Nimbārka, 58, 67, 116, 314  
 Nirṛti, 383  
 Nisumbha, 296, 298, 302  
 Nivedita, Sister, 224  
 Nizami, K.A., 448  
 Nrga, 153  
 Nṛsiṃha, 43, 85, 212, 217, 218  
 Nṛtya-Gaṇapati, 348  
 Nyagrodha, 124  
 Nyagrodhaśāyin, 217  
  
 Oldenberg, 16, 157, 225  
 O Malley, 21  
 Omar, A., 435  
 Orphism, 424  
 Oshadhi, 287, 424  
 Otto, R., 22, 25, 26  
  
 Padmanābha, 212, 217  
 Padmapāda, 64  
 Padmāvatī, 317  
 Pallas Athene, 228  
 Pañchadevopāsakas, 360  
 Pañchamakāras, 413  
 Pāñcharātra, 165-170, 404  
 Pāñchavīras, 132  
 Pāñchavṛshnīviras, 210  
 Pāñchayajña, 136  
 Pāñchāyatana, 116  
 Pāñchāyatanapūjā, 371  
 Pañchapūjakas, 346  
 Pañchopāsana, 411  
 Pandaia, 183, 185, 186  
 Pande, G.C., 30, 57, 61, 64, 68, 70, 82, 83, 100, 119, 141, 194, 389, 390, 412  
 Pande, L.P., 331  
 Pande, Susmita, 90, 92, 93, 99, 100, 101, 105, 108, 109, 111, 115, 116  
 Pandeya, Ramaji, 193  
 Pandey, Sangamlal, 62  
 Paṇḍitārādhyā, 275  
 Pāṇḍu, 186, 283  
 Pāṇini, 19, 27, 51, 57, 96, 98, 101, 187, 204, 221, 249, 331, 345  
 Panikkar, K.M., 448  
 Pantheon, epic-Paurāṇika, 72, 79  
 Pantheon, Vedic, 72  
 Parākramabāhu, 378  
 Parameshthīn, 376  
 Parāśara, 27, 33, 261  
 Pārāśarya, 27, 57  
 Paraśurāma, 20, 86, 217, 218, 220, 221, 247  
 Para Vāsudeva, 211  
 Parendī, 287  
 Pargiter, F.E., 17, 34, 184, 185, 296  
 Pārijāta, 123, 227  
 Pārijātahara, 217  
 Pārsīs, 432  
 Pārśvanātha, 179, 200  
 Parthasarathy, K.E., 193  
 Pārvatī, 76, 247, 268, 289-326, 347, 352, 361, 363, 372, 392, 394  
 Pārvatīnandana, 361  
 Paśupati, 153, 241, 244  
 Patañjali, 96, 97, 98, 128, 131, 187, 189, 202, 204, 213, 221, 231, 252, 258, 360, 389  
 Pathak, K.B., 60  
 Pathak, V.S., 138, 238, 259, 261, 262, 270



- Patrick Olivelle, 56  
 Pattanikadavul, 326  
 Paul, 419, 422  
 Paul, Courtright, 353  
 Paul, H.C., 297, 305  
 Paulomī, 292  
 Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva, 188, 207  
 Pavie, 197  
 Peacock, 123  
 Peter, 422  
 Pey, 111  
 Phal, U.N., 306  
 Pinākin, 245  
 Piṅgaleśvarī, 308  
 Pīpala, 78, 124  
 Pippalāda, 330  
 Pippalādmātā, 324  
 Piśāchas, 78, 380  
 Piśṭapurī, 228  
 Piśṭapurikādevī, 228  
 Piṭryāna, 30, 56  
 Pīyūshaharaṇa, 217  
 Pliny, 428  
 Plott, John C., 79  
 Pocock, D., 137  
 Polier, 197  
 Polo, Marco, 186  
 Polymius, 429  
 Porus, 181, 182, 231  
 Poussin, 25, 80, 138, 196  
 Prabhā, 308  
 Pramathas, 380  
 Pṛthu Vainya, 217  
 Ptolemy, 337, 428  
 Pūdam, 111  
 Pulumāvi, 429  
 Puṇḍrikāksha, 236  
 Puṇṇabhadda, 98  
 Punnāi, 233  
 Puram̐dhi, 287  
 Pūrṇabhadra, 131  
 Pūrṇaprajña, 66  
 Purushārtha, 70  
 Pūrva Kaulas, 401  
 Pusalker, A.D., 16, 20, 22, 24, 33, 177, 183, 184  
 Pūshan, 120, 286, 288, 327  
 Pusṭi, 223, 292, 308  
 Pythagoras, 424  
 Qadr, 435  
 Quraish, 435  
 Rabiā, 444  
 Rādhā, 75, 107, 116, 233, 234, 307, 372  
 Radhakrishnan, S., 22, 23, 27, 31, 32, 52, 57, 62, 64, 71, 91, 94, 192  
 Rādhikā, 108  
 Raghavendrachar, H.N., 67  
 Raghvan, V., 47  
 Rāhu, 342  
 Rāhujit, 217  
 Rai, J.M., 138  
 Raivata, 215  
 Rājan, 365  
 Rājaśekhara, 26, 261, 403  
 Rājasimhavarman, 395  
 Rājayoga, 46  
 Raji, 148  
 Rājuvula, 132  
 Rājyavardhana, 332  
 Rākā, 285, 287  
 Raktabija, 296, 298, 310  
 Raktadantikā, 298  
 Rāma, 19, 20, 38, 40, 43, 46, 65, 76, 81, 85, 86, 98, 99, 107, 108, 215, 216, 222, 224, 231, 234, 235, 236, 293, 301, 231, 376, 386  
 Rāmabhadra, 332  
 Rāma-Dāśarathī, 20, 218, 220  
 Rama-Dhanurdhara, 217  
 Rāmamiśra, 236  
 Ramaṇā, 307  
 Rāmānuja, 27, 58, 64, 65, 66, 67, 95, 105, 115, 116, 200, 213, 236, 243, 257, 265, 270, 375, 314  
 Ramanujam, B.V., 91  
 Ramaswami Sastri, V.A., 47  
 Rambhā, 307  
 Ranade, R.D., 31  
 Rangacharya, V., 236  
 Rao, Gopinath, 130, 252, 350, 382, 384, 385  
 Rao, Nagaraja, 59, 142  
 Rāśikara, 261

Rathakrāntā, 395  
 Ratipriyā, 307  
 Rātrī, 293  
 Rauhiṇeya, 215, 231  
 Rāvaṇa, 20, 81, 82, 83, 85, 98, 221  
 Raychaudhuri, B.C., 313, 314  
 Raychaudhuri, H.C., 18, 96, 160, 177, 196, 198, 200, 213, 235, 236, 424  
 Resurrection, 422  
 Revanta, 338, 341, 342  
 Revatī, 215, 305  
 Rhys, Davids, 97, 180  
 Robertson, A., 420  
 Rohiṇī, 43, 211, 213, 215  
 Roy, J.C., 233  
 Roy, S.C., 22  
 Rshabha, 196  
 Ruchi, 147  
 Rudra, 43, 73, 77, 81, 89, 90, 93, 94, 98, 120, 124, 130, 135, 214, 239-280, 328, 379, 385, 387, 396  
 Rudrāksha, 45  
 Rudrāṇī, 291, 292, 305  
 Rudraśiva, 214, 239, 288  
 Rudraśambhu, 408  
 Rufinus, 425  
 Rukmiṇī, 224  
 Ruru, 310  
 Ruth, 419  
 Ryder, A.W., 22  
  
 Śabara, 57  
 Śabarāsvāmin, 54, 55  
 Śabarī, 98  
 Sabbāth, 436  
 Sachau, 140, 339  
 Śachi, 288, 292  
 Sachiādevī, 411  
 Sadāśiva, 357, 396  
 Sādhyas, 380, 381, 382  
 Sadyojāta, 254, 255  
 Sagara, 148  
 Sāgarāmanthana, 73, 227, 245  
 Sahadeva, 85  
 Sahajoli, 46

Sahasrāksha, 245  
 Sahasrāksha-Mahādeva-Rudra, 387  
 Śākalya, 93  
 Śākambharī, 292, 295, 324  
 Śākinī, 78, 409  
 Sakiyāmātā, 324  
 Śakra, 331  
 Sakrāimātā, 324  
 Śakti, 8, 45, 82, 315, 380, 392, 400  
 Śakti-Gaṇeśa, 356  
 Śaktiparishad, 270  
 Śaktipīṭhas, 120, 305  
 Śaktyātman, 217  
 Śālagrama, 36, 75, 78, 120, 126, 218  
 Śālakataṅkaṭa, 349  
 Śālaṅkāyanas, 341  
 Salāt, 440  
 Śalya, 246  
 Samāchārādeva, 322  
 Samādhi Vaiśya, 297  
 Samaleśvarī, 323  
 Śamarī, 324  
 Samayins, 401  
 Sāmba, 78, 211, 212, 335-337  
 Sambandar, 112  
 Sāmbapura, 112  
 Saṁjñā, 328, 336, 338  
 Saṁkshobha, 322  
 Sammita, 349  
 Samudrasena, 267  
 Saṁvatsara, 122  
 Samudragupta, 121  
 Sanandana, 62  
 Sanatkumāra, 94, 373  
 Sandrocottos, 182  
 Śāṇḍilya, 90  
 Saṅgama, 324  
 Saṅgama-Basava, 273  
 Śani, 342  
 Sanaka, 357  
 Sankalia, H.D., 20  
 Śaṅkara, 21, 24, 27, 51, 58, 59, 61, 62-64, 67, 91, 95, 114, 116, 135, 145, 194, 241, 253, 279, 353, 355

- Śaṅkara, Ādi, 60  
 Śaṅkarāchārya, 51, 86, 177, 193, 257, 266, 268, 243, 280, 291  
 Sankaranarayan, P., 63  
 Śaṅkarī, 324  
 Śaṅkarshaṇa, 97, 100, 126, 127, 132, 205, 206, 208, 210, 213-16, 223, 231, 235  
 Śaṅkarshaṇa-Rudra, 214  
 Śaṅkaṭa-Chaturthī, 125  
 Śaṅkhachūḍa, 188  
 Śaṅkhalikhita, 139  
 Sandhyākaranandin, 321  
 Santāna-Gaṇapati, 353, 354  
 Śāntrakshita, 68  
 Śāntātman, 217, 222  
 San Thome, 427  
 Śāntideva, 109  
 Sapta-mātrkā, 309, 323, 324  
 Sarajanmā, 361  
 Śāradā, 343  
 Saralā, 322  
 Saramā, 78  
 Sāraṅgadeva, 260  
 Saranyu, 287, 328  
 Sarasvatī, 44, 45, 76, 78, 223, 228, 230, 285, 287, 292, 315, 317, 321, 333, 355, 378, 379  
 Sarasvatī, Dayānanda, 129  
 Sarasvatī, Madhusūdana, 21, 106  
 Sarkar, Amal, 302  
 Sarkar, M.N., 21  
 Śārṅgapāṇi, 13  
 Sarpas, 381  
 Śarva, 248, 387  
 Śarvajñamitra, 317  
 Śarvanātha, 322  
 Sarvatāta, 210  
 Śāsana devatās, 319  
 Sastri, D.S., 105  
 Sastri, K.A.N., 240  
 Sastri, N.K., 110, 114, 115  
 Sastri, S. Lakshminarasimha, 353  
 Sastri, Siddhesvara, 184  
 Śatākshī, 295  
 Śatarūpā, 379  
 Satī, 309  
 Śatrughna, 85  
 Satyabhāmā, 43, 231  
 Satyavādinī, 308  
 Sātvata, 237  
 Saul, 417  
 Śaunaka, 33, 252  
 Sauti, 34  
 Savitā, 330  
 Savitrī, 120, 328  
 Sāvitrī, 135, 292, 327, 329, 375, 379  
 Sāyana, 89, 130  
 Schrader, 24, 234, 395  
 Schroeder, L. Von, 158  
 Seal, B.N., 198, 199  
 Śekhara, 397  
 Sekhyananda, Swami, 60  
 Selene, 228  
 Senart, 32, 196  
 Senāni, 361  
 Sen, D.C., 20  
 Sen, Madhu, 22, 144  
 Śesha, 85, 122  
 Śeshanāga, 214, 330  
 Śeyon-Murugan, 366, 367  
 Śeyyaval, 324  
 Shaḍānana, 361, 362  
 Shāhi Khingāla, 359  
 Shaṇmātura, 361  
 Shaṇmukha, 360, 387, 388  
 Sharma, Arvind, 21, 22, 103, 105  
 Sharma, B.R., 345  
 Sharma, D.B., 389  
 Sharma, D.S., 22  
 Sharma Munshi Ram, 92, 93, 94  
 Sharma, R.S., 134, 145, 148, 149, 152, 154, 155  
 Sharma, S.R., 447  
 Sharma, Vaidehisharan, 291  
 Shastri, A.M., 145  
 Shembvarnekar, 328  
 Shende, N. J., 157  
 Shi'a, 441, 442, 443  
 Shilanand, Hemraj, 21, 22, 24

- Shivaji, 86  
 Sibae, 181, 249  
 Šibi, 181, 249  
 Siboi, 249  
 Siddhas, 380, 381, 448  
 Siddhalingas, 254  
 Siddhantashastree, R.K., 276, 278  
 Siddhi, 356  
 Šikhā, 45  
 Šikhi, 237  
 Sīlamātā, 324  
 Simhaparishad, 270  
 Simhikā, 308  
 Singhal, J.P., 73  
 Singh, B.P., 235  
 Singh, O.P., 368  
 Singh, Ranjit, 7, 47  
 Singh, S., 138  
 Singh, S.P., 29  
 Singh, S.R., 332  
 Sinha, B.C., 1, 123, 126, 282, 550, 380  
 Sinha, B.P. 281, 320,  
 Sinha, Judunath, 193, 223, 260, 262, 279  
 Sinivāli, 223, 292  
 Šipivishṭa, 158, 188  
 Sīradhvaja, Janaka, 221  
 Sircar, D.C., 71, 88, 89, 90, 91, 96, 110, 111, 112, 144, 152, 156, 157, 186, 189, 203, 211, 226, 318, 323, 324, 246  
 Sirimā Devatā, 228, 230, 320  
 Śruttonḍar, 113  
 Śīsnadevā, 3, 130, 251  
 Śīsupāla, 85, 188, 208  
 Sītā, 20, 45, 98, 99, 107, 108, 221, 222, 228, 283, 292, 301, 307  
 Śītalā, 383, 384  
 Sitaramaih, G., 358  
 Śitikanṭha, 244  
 Śiva, 6, 8, 10, 37, 38, 40, 43, 44, 62, 73, 74, 75, 78, 81, 82, 88, 106, 110, 113, 116, 121, 126, 127, 135, 136, 181, 183, 239-280, 287, 312, 315, 321, 333, 353, 360, 362, 363, 366, 373, 377, 378, 387, 390, 392, 394, 408, 411  
 Śiva-Bhāgavatas, 251, 257  
 Śiva-chaturdaśī, 248  
 Śivāditya, 52  
 Śivadūti, 305  
 Śivaguru, 60  
 Śivakāriṇī, 308  
 Śivaliṅga, 75, 78, 250-56  
 Śivanābha, 254  
 Śiva-paśupati, 122, 285  
 Śiva-Śrikanṭha, 259  
 Śiva-Sūrya, 411  
 Skambha, 376  
 Skanda, 153, 187, 247, 310, 360-373, 387  
 Skandagrahas, 363  
 Skandagupta, 232, 311, 340, 332  
 Skanda-Kumāra, 361  
 Skanda-Mahāsenā, 126  
 Smārta-Pañchopāsakas, 341, 358, 415  
 Smārtas, 372  
 Smart, N., 419, 421, 435, 439  
 Smith, V.A., 426, 428  
 Sodāsa, 132  
 Solapuamā, 323  
 Sogani, K.C., 32, 110  
 Solomon, 417, 419  
 Soma, 77, 78, 123, 224, 342, 375  
 Somakas, 334  
 Somakhaḍḍukas, 267  
 Somānanda, 278-280  
 Somasiddhānta, 268  
 Somayājī, Keśava, 65  
 Sönderblom, N., 79  
 Sorokin, 138  
 Sphuliṅginī, 290  
 Spooner, 124, 332  
 Śrāddha, 78  
 Śraddhā, 287, 292  
 Srashtā, 376  
 Sreenivasa, H.V., 111  
 Śrī, 223, 225, 287, 292, 293



- Śrichakras, 126, 401  
 Śridhara, 21, 49, 103, 212  
 Śrikanṭha, 258, 275, 279  
 Śrikara, 48  
 Śrī-Lakshmi, 127, 223-30, 313, 322  
 Śrīmātā, 305  
 Srinivasachari, P.N., 65  
 Śrīpati, 217, 279  
 Śrīvidyā, 305, 391  
 Śrīvallabha, Śrīmāra, 112  
 Srivastava, V.C., 327, 330, 331, 337, 359  
 Śrīvatsa, 224  
 Śrutadevatās, 379  
 St. Bartholomew, 416, 428, 429  
 Stella, 318  
 Sthiralinga, 253  
 Sthānu, 247  
 St. John, 424  
 St. Thomas, 416, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429  
 Subandhu, 321  
 Subhadra, 190, 305, 308  
 Subhrāja, 365  
 Subrahmanyam, Na Kaa, 333, 360, 425, 428, 429  
 Sub-vyūhas, 112  
 Sudarśana, 124, 125, 259, 320  
 Sudarśanachakra, 331  
 Śuddhi, 308  
 Sudhūmravarṇā, 290  
 Sūfism, 443-46  
 Sugandhā, 307  
 Sugrīva, 85, 98  
 Sujihvā, 336  
 Śuka, 135, 147, 357  
 Sukeśin, 148  
 Śukra, 342  
 Sukthankar, V.S., 17-20  
 Śūlagava, 244  
 Sulaiman, 427  
 Sulakatā, 319  
 Sulohitā, 290  
 Sumaṅgalā, 319  
 Sumati, 48  
 Śumbha, 296, 298, 310  
 Śumbha-Niśumbha, 297  
 Sun, 157  
 Sundaramūrti, 113  
 Sunnā, 442-43  
 Supannas, 98  
 Suparṇa, 122, 208, 229  
 Suratha, 296, 297  
 Sureśvarāchārya, 61  
 Suriya, 98  
 Sūrya, 3, 38, 44, 78, 85, 120, 122, 136, 327-342, 360, 372, 373, 383, 387  
 Suryakanta, 399  
 Sūryamitra, 332  
 Sūta, 33  
 Sūtārā, 317  
 Sūta Ugraśravas, 17  
 Suvarchasā, 338  
 Suvarṇā, 338  
 Suvarṇapaksha, 387  
 Suzuki, D.T., 432  
 Svachchhandā, 396  
 Svāhā, 308, 361  
 Svaphalka, 231  
 Svarṇa-Gaṇapati, 353, 354  
 Svastika, 125  
 Svayambhū, 266, 374, 376  
 Śvetā, 317  
 Śvetadvīpa, 99, 194, 198, 200, 201  
 Śvetavarāhasvāmin, 219  
 Śvetaketu, 283  
 Swami, S., 421  
 Swami, Narahari, 302  
 Swami, Vimalananda, 56  
 Sylvain, Lévi, 382  
 Synoptic Gospels, 420  
 Tala, 211  
 Taṇḍin, 33  
 Taporāsi, 261  
 Tārā, 316, 317, 323, 411  
 Tāraka, 45, 160, 362, 369  
 Tarkabhushan, 54  
 Tarachand, 448  
 Tārakājī, 361  
 Tārakāsura, 361  
 Taraporewala, 432

- Tārīṇī, 318  
 Tārṅkshya, 385  
 Taruṇa-Gaṇapati, 356  
 Tathāgata, 424  
 Taqṣīr, 444  
 Tatpuruṣa, 254, 255  
 Tawhīd, 438  
 Telang, K.T., 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 60, 200, 201  
 Ten Commandments, 417, 418  
 Teṅkalai, 236  
 Ten Tribes, 417  
 Thomas, E.J., 22  
 Thaplyal, K.K., 227  
 Thebaid Monasticism, 424  
 Thoreau, 138  
 Tilak, B.G., Lokmanya, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 31, 191, 194  
 Tilottamā, 308  
 Tirnāvukkarasu, 113  
 Tirumaḷīśai, 111  
 Tirumangai, 112  
 Tiruppāṇ, 112  
 Tiwari, Arya Ramachandra G., 73, 76, 78  
 Toṇḍar-aḍip-poḍi, 112  
 Toramāṇa, 233  
 Trayambaka, 244, 245, 253  
 Triad, 73  
 Tribhuvaneśvarī, 293  
 Trika Śāstra, 276  
 Tripathi, L.K., 378  
 Tripura, 319  
 Tripuradahana, 244, 246  
 Tripurāntaka, 271  
 Tripurasundarī, 305, 401, 402  
 Trisandhyā, 307  
 Trita, 100  
 Triśalā, 228  
 Trivikrama, 99, 212  
 Tulasī, 36, 75, 78, 124  
 Tulasī Vṛndā, 188  
 Tusṭi, 223  
 Tushtikara, 323  
 Tvashṭṛ, 246, 375  
 Tvasṭā, 328  
 Uchchhishta-Gaṇapati, 354, 356  
 Udayana, 51  
 Uddālaka, 283  
 Udyotkara, 51  
 Uditāchārya, 260, 261  
 Ugra, 241, 396  
 Ugra-Bhairava, 266  
 Ugrasena, 231, 336  
 Ugraśravas, 34  
 Ugratārā, 317, 322  
 Ulūka, 52  
 Umā, 94, 269, 285, 289, 292, 305, 307, 321, 262  
 Umā Haimāvati, 289, 291  
 Umā-Pārvatī, 248  
 Umāpati, 258  
 Umar, 439, 441, 442  
 Unmatta, 268, 356, 396  
 Unmatta-Bhairava, 267, 269  
 Upadhyaya, B., 60, 234, 386  
 Upadhyaya, G.P., 154  
 Upadhyaya, K.N., 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 59  
 Upamanyu, 252  
 Upamita, 261  
 Uparichara, Vasu, 99, 100  
 Upāya, 316, 393  
 Upendra, 180, 212  
 Ūrdhvamedhū, 239  
 Ūrdhvaretas, 253  
 Urvaśī, 308  
 Usmān, 441, 442  
 Ushā, 73, 78, 120, 286, 292, 327, 328, 332  
 Ushmita, 349  
 Utpala, 195, 307, 337  
 Uttara Kaulas, 401, 402  
 Vachaspati, 51, 53, 54  
 Vachaspati Miśra, 256, 263  
 Vaḍakalāi, 236  
 Vadekar, D.D., 22  
 Vāgambhṛṇī, 299  
 Vāgīśvara, 217  
 Vaidikāchāra, 414  
 Vaidya, C.V., 20, 105  
 Vaidya, P.L., 17

- Vaijayanta, 131, 250  
 Vaikhāṇasa, 237  
 Vaikuṇṭha, 106, 153, 156, 238  
 Vaikuṇṭhaloka, 238  
 Vainateya, 387  
 Vairochani, 290  
 Vaiśampāyana, 17, 191  
 Vaishṇavi, 291, 295, 308, 310, 406  
 Vaiśravaṇa, 381  
 Vairamegha, 112  
 Vaivasvata Manu, 183, 195  
 Vāk, 288, 292  
 Vākpati, 321  
 Vallabha, 58, 66, 67, 314  
 Vallabhāchārya, 107, 108  
 Valli, 367, 370  
 Vālmiki, 18, 19, 39, 221, 261, 376  
 Vāmāchāra, 400, 410  
 Vāmadeva, 254, 255, 330, 366  
 Vāmana avatāra, 78, 81, 212, 217, 218, 220, 235, 236  
 Vandaniyā, 308  
 Varāha, 81, 86, 91, 216, 217, 218, 219, 232, 235, 310  
 Varāhamihira, 195, 220, 265, 266, 311, 334, 337, 338  
 Vārāhī, 322, 406  
 Varma, V.P., 84  
 Varuṇa, 73, 77, 93, 121, 123, 159, 201, 229, 245, 288, 289, 300, 328, 330, 383  
 Varuṇadatta, 96  
 Vashatkāra, 73  
 Vāsudeva, 3, 19, 23, 86, 96, 97, 100, 104, 125, 131, 211, 213, 232, 258, 388  
 Vāsudevaka, 96  
 Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, 117, 131, 170-206, 243, 335  
 Vāsudeva-Vishṇu, 126, 127  
 Vasudharā, 229  
 Vasugupta, 277  
 Vāsukī, 78  
 Vasu, 73  
 Vāta, 124  
 Vātapatraśāyin, 209  
 Vātsyāyana, 51, 321, 378  
 Vāyu, 73, 85, 94, 383  
 Vedavyāsa, 54, 217  
 Vedavid, 217  
 Veluthat, K., 155  
 Vena, 148  
 Venkatarama Sastri, T.R., 47, 115  
 Venkataraman, K.P., 237  
 Venkateswara, S.V., 129, 130  
 Vessavana, 383  
 Vibhāvarī, 229  
 Vibhīṣaṇa, 98  
 Vibhūti, 45  
 Vidagdha, 93  
 Vidhātā, 226, 376  
 Vidhātṛ, 226  
 Vidyādevīs, 379  
 Vidyādharas, 87, 381, 382  
 Vidyādhideva, 217  
 Vidyutkeśa, 245  
 Vighanarāja, 347  
 Vighneśvarī, 354  
 Vighraharāja IV, Chāhamāna, 449  
 Vihaṅgama, 22, 217, 385  
 Vijayā, 395  
 Vijayālaya, 326  
 Vijñānabhikṣhu, 53, 54, 68  
 Vijñāneśvara, 48  
 Vikhanas, 237  
 Vimalā, 307, 322  
 Vilvapatrikā, 307  
 Vināyaka, 343, 347, 348, 352  
 Vināyakapāla, 324, 332  
 Vindhyavāsini, 307, 321  
 Vinatā, 122, 385  
 Vipranārāyaṇa, 113  
 Vipulā, 307  
 Virabhadra, 246  
 Virāj, 291, 322  
 Viralakkhī, 315  
 Viraśaiva, 272  
 Virāṭapurusha, 242  
 Vira-Vighneśa, 351  
 Virgin Mary, 420  
 Viśālākshī, 306  
 Viśākhā, 131



- Vishṇu, 8, 18, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 85, 89, 98, 99, 102, 104, 106, 107, 110, 122, 123, 124, 125, 156-238, 254, 256, 274, 287, 300, 309, 310, 327, 228, 329, 330, 333, 334, 347, 354, 357, 360, 372, 373, 377, 378, 379, 380, 386, 388, 397, 400, 404, 411  
 Vishṇugopa, 235  
 Vishṇuloka, 8, 9, 151  
 Vishṇukrāntā, 395  
 Vishṇumāyā, 295, 313  
 Vishṇupriyā, 75  
 Vishvaksena, 231  
 Viśiṣṭā, 60  
 Viśvabhujā, 305  
 Viśvadeva, 91, 77  
 Viśvajit, 60  
 Viśvakarman, 336, 374, 375  
 Viśvakāya, 180  
 Viśvamukhi, 308  
 Viśvanātha, 52  
 Viśvarāja, 259  
 Viśvaruchi, 290  
 Viśveśa, 376  
 Viśveśvara, 250  
 Viśveśvarādhyā, 274  
 Viśvarūpa, 48, 64, 145, 198, 217  
 Vivanhant, 327  
 Vivasvān, 191, 327, 328  
 Vizāgo, 360  
 Vogel, 122  
 Vopadeva, 38  
 Vṛndā, 188  
 Vṛshākapi, 245  
 Vṛshṇi, 104  
 Vṛtra, 129, 130, 160, 221  
 Vṛtrāṇi, 129  
 Vyāntara Devatās, 380  
 Vyāsa, 9, 16, 27, 35, 39, 54, 57, 61, 152, 350  
 Vyasa, R.N., 91, 94  
 Vyasa, Sadananda, 59  
 Vyomakeśa, 245  
 Vyūha, Vāsudeva, 212  
 Watters, 339  
 Weber, A., 197, 198, 201, 202, 424  
 Wema Kadaphises, 252, 338, 384  
 Wheeler, Talboys, 23, 26  
 William Jones, 197  
 Williams, Monier, 177  
 Wilkins, 22  
 Wilson, 129, 160, 197  
 Winternitz, 350, 390  
 Woodroffe, J., 390  
 Yadava, B.N.S., 145, 393, 412, 414  
 Yādavaprakāśa, 65  
 Yaduvamsi, 244, 245, 247  
 Yogeśvarī, 310  
 Yahweh, 416, 418  
 Yājñavalkya, 35, 43, 48, 93, 137, 138, 145, 349, 371  
 Yakkhas, 98  
 Yakshas, 3, 78, 110, 121, 124, 351, 380  
 Yakshinī/Yakshī, 110, 121  
 Yama, 10, 73, 78, 123, 183, 241, 300, 313, 342, 371, 383, 432  
 Yamī, 313, 432  
 Yāmunāchārya, 65, 115, 236, 257, 270  
 Yantra, 45  
 Yaśaḥpāla, 269  
 Yāska, 96, 129, 365  
 Yaśodā, 189  
 Yaśodharman, 233, 322  
 Yathrib, 436  
 Yaudheyas, 364, 368  
 Yazid, 441  
 Yeshua, 419  
 Yogaloka, 48  
 Yoganidrā, 314  
 Yoginīs, 319, 409, 411  
 Yogirāja, 239  
 Yoshā, 287  
 Yuan Chwang, 110, 264, 265, 266, 309, 339



Yudhishṭhira, 85, 145, 185,  
209, 246, 393, 294, 331  
Yūpastambhas, 126

Zaid, 435

Zarathushṭra, 432  
Zimmer, H., 120, 343  
Zimmis, 431  
Zoroastrianism, 432, 448  
Zoroaster, 432











